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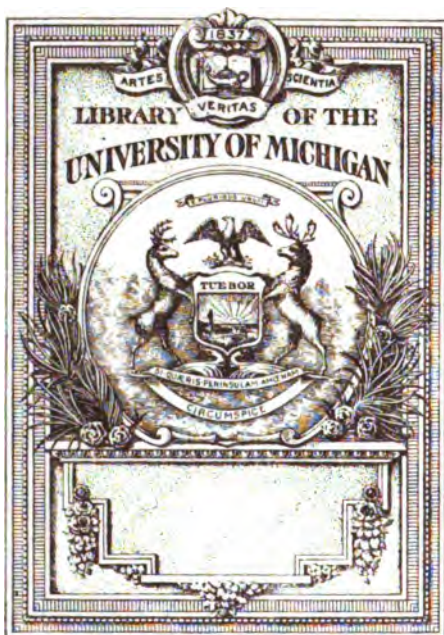
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ITALY TO-DAY

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1814-1871

By BOLTON KING, M.A.

In Two Vols., Demy 8vo, with Maps and Plans, 24s. net

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ITALY TO-DAY

1897

BY BOLTON KING
& THOMAS OKEY

*"Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so shall ever be!"*

London
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PREFACE

WE have attempted in this volume to give an accurate and fair account of political and social questions in Italy at the present day. It would be presumptuous for foreigners to describe the inner life and thought of another country, and this we have not tried to do. We have limited ourselves to the outward manifestations of that life, as they shape themselves in politics, in social movements, in literature. Here the foreigner starts with the advantage that he is, at all events, comparatively free from bias. We have approached the various problems without prepossessions, and we have done our best to understand and describe the point of view of each party. We have gone for our information to the men and literature of all sections — to Liberals and Catholics, to Socialists and Conservatives, to the leaders and the rank-and-file. It has been a pleasant task, not only because of the unfailing courtesy and lavish kindness of those whose help we sought, but because each further investigation has strengthened a faith in the future of Italy. These pages will prove, we hope, to the English reader, first, that the divisions in Italian life are neither as deep nor as permanent as they are

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often thought to be ; next, that underneath the slough of misgovernment and corruption and political apathy there is a rejuvenated nation, instinct with the qualities that make a great people.

We would be the first to recognize that some of the subjects dealt with have received inadequate treatment ; and we regret that the exigencies of space have prevented us from using much valuable material that has been supplied to us, and have compelled us to leave several important matters entirely untouched. But we believed it to be better to give a general view of Italian life within a readable compass, rather than overburden the book with details, which would only interest the specialist.

It is impossible for us to thank sufficiently the many friends in Italy and England, without whose help this volume could not have been written. Among others who have assisted us we would wish to express our especial gratitude to Signor Adolfo Albertazzi, Baron Filippo Bacile di Castiglione, Monsignor Bacile, Mr. Alberto Ball, Count Ugo Balzani, Lieut.-Col. Enrico Barone, On. Leonida Bissolati, Comm. Luigi Bodio (late Chief of the Italian Statistical Office), Signor Mario Borsa, Signor Augusto Bosco, Padre S. M. Brandi, S.J. (editor of the *Civiltà Cattolica*), Signor Ottone Brentari (editor of the *Corriere della Sera*), Don Brizio, Dr. Kenworthy Brown, Cav. Gueritore Enrico Broya, Prof. Alessandro Chiappelli, Signor Gustavo Chiesi,

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BOLTON KING.

THOMAS OKEY.

February 1901.

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ITALY TO-DAY

CHAPTER I

POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

History, 1871-1887; Crispi; 1891-1896. The Right. The Constitutional Left. The Franchise; influence and corruption. The Chamber of Deputies. The Senate. The Monarchy.

ONE of the first facts that meets the observer of Italian life is the chaos and decay of the old political parties. They have lost faith in their principles, faith in their country, faith in themselves. Their policies seem little better than a selfish struggle for office, a blind resistance to forces that they cannot understand and cannot assimilate, and therefore fear. It was very different a generation ago. Nothing marks more painfully the blight that has fallen on Italian politics than the gulf between the Right and Left of to-day and the politicians who governed new-made Italy. In the sixties and early seventies the Right were a great party. Conservatives by association, they had learnt from Cavour to be Liberals. They had a great statesman in Ricasoli; leaders high in the second rank in Lanza and La Marmora and Sella. They had settled Italy; they gave it a very large measure of free-trade, its railway policy, its new codes, its local government.

They made a bold attempt to fix the relations between Church and State. They struggled valiantly to restore Italian finance, and Minghetti's budget of 1876 at last brought revenue and expenditure to a level. When Unity was once completed, they kept the country free from foreign entanglements or heavy military expenditure. They disliked any further extension of political freedom, but, with very few backslidings, they did not try or wish to curtail the statutory liberties of the country.

But they were so intent on balancing the finances that they forgot social reform, and the taxes, which their policy compelled them to impose, weighed very heavily. In 1876 they were defeated, and the Left for the first time came into office. Nominally, it was more Liberal than the Right, but it had inherent weaknesses, which robbed its Liberalism of reality. The small interval that parted its policy from that of the Right had made it from the first a partisan opposition, that thought more of office than reform. It drew its strength from the South, and the South was the home of all that was unhealthy in political life. Most of its leaders, though patriots in a way, had small scruples as to methods, and were very ready to exploit the rich opportunities of corruption that both South and North offered them, and live by the little arts of Parliamentary intrigue. For the most part, their big programmes of social and financial and administrative reform melted away in office. The more Radical section, led by Cairoli and Zanardelli, was gradually cast adrift, and the mass of the Left

appropriated the policy of the Right—itself fast degenerating—and leant on it for support. From the end of 1876 power passed for nearly eleven years, with two short intervals, into the hands of Depretis, a petty, irresolute, sceptical man, with a profound knowledge of human vice and frailty, that took the place of principle or truth in his system of government. With Minghetti's unhappy assistance, Depretis made a coalition with a section of the Right, and created a party without a programme, that lived from hand to mouth on Parliamentary manoeuvres, and nursed a shameless corruption, which ate out all that was wholesome in Italian politics. The Civil Service became a machine to secure a ministerial majority. Constituencies were bought with local railways and public works, with every direct or indirect form of bribery. In Parliament the Government "exploited chance," bribing members, buying the support of this or that shifting group, veering sometimes to right, sometimes to left, with little other aim but to keep in office. Depretis, it is true, widened the franchise and abolished some of the more odious taxes. But it is to this period that Italy still mainly owes the worst features of her later politics,—the electoral corruption, the degradation of the Civil Service, the mad Colonial policy, the Triple Alliance, the protective tariff, the worst of the Bank scandals.

Depretis died in the summer of 1887, and was succeeded by Crispi, whom he had bought from opposition by a seat in the Cabinet four months before. Crispi was a much abler man than Depretis. He had, at all events, grandiose policies, a considerable

capacity of leading men, a force and insistence that fascinated Italy and for a time made him its dictator, more worshipped and more hated than any other Italian statesman of this generation. When he was in power, men felt that, at all events, everything was screwed up and tightened. But he was as unscrupulous as Depretis in his methods, and he had a hardy inconsistency, that came not so much from any deliberate dishonesty as from an impulsiveness that made him slave to the passion of the moment, quite forgetful of the promises and policy of yesterday. At one moment he paraded his friendliness to France, a month or two later he was irritating her by hot and foolish speeches. Now he posed as an anti-clerical and freethinker, now he spoke as one who longed for reconciliation with the Vatican. In 1886 he said that the "workman must be freed from the slavery of capital"; in 1894 he charged Socialism with "raising the right of spoliation to a science." The wildest fancies, madcap adventures, anything that was showy and dazzling stood for statesmanship. In 1894 he believed, on the vaguest of forged evidence, that the Sicilian Socialists were plotting to surrender the island to France. When the Russian exiles crowded into Italy after the assassination of Alexander II., Crispi, then an ex-Minister and over sixty years old, preached a crusade of civilized nations against Russia. He was a savage, passionate fighter, who stuck at no severity, however unjust or unconstitutional, towards a political opponent, and whose intolerance grew till the ex-Democrat became essentially a despot. First the

Radical, then the Socialist chimera swelled in his imagination, till he fancied them to be real dangers to Italy, and himself its only saviour. He had been brought up among conspiracies, and he always thought that his opponents were conspiring. It was this that made him use every resource of government to stamp out plots that only lived in his own perfervid mind.

But even Crispi could not permanently obscure Italian common-sense. For a moment the country had welcomed a dictatorship, that superseded the corrupt Parliamentary oligarchy. But the reaction against his "megalomania,"¹ against the financial slough and the commercial disaster that followed the lapse of the French treaty of commerce, swelled, till in January 1891 an idle outburst of his own bad temper put the Premier in a minority. No single group was strong enough to succeed him, and a coalition was combined between the progressive Moderates of Di Rudini's party and a less reputable section of the Right that followed Nicotera. They had an excellent programme—to reduce expenditure all round, have no fresh debts and no fresh taxes, and especially to bring the cost of the colony of Erythræa within narrow limits.² But they were paralyzed by the friction between the two allied groups and by Di Rudini's weakness. In May 1892 they were succeeded by a Cabinet taken from the Left with Giolitti as Premier. Giolitti went back to the electoral corruption, which Di Rudini had partially abandoned, and it was only his

¹ The phrase seems to have been invented by Count Jacini.

² See below, p. 305.

deserts that the Bank scandals came to light under his administration. Then came the troubles in Sicily and the Lunigiana,¹ and Giolitti's incapacity to cope with them raised a call for Crispi. He seemed the one strong man who could restore order, and the governing classes, scared by the risings, little cared at what cost it were done. Crispi, obsessed by the phantasm of a separatist plot in Sicily, lost his head and struck wildly and blindly. It was perhaps to divert attention from home affairs, that he pushed on his forward policy in Erythræa, and attacked Abyssinia. But a great disaster saved Italy from worse things, and when the news of the defeat of Adowa came in March 1896, the common-sense of the country drove once and for all from office the man whose wild, unscrupulous ambitions had brought the great humiliation on its head.

Adowa opened a new chapter in Italian politics. It has sobered Italy and made her feel how she was courting ruin by her adventures abroad and her refusal to reform at home. Coming on the heels of the Bank scandals, it has produced a sense of shame and humiliation and national self-consciousness, which is sometimes exaggerated, but which is, at all events, the first step towards progress. It has wrecked the credit of the old and decaying elements in Italian politics, and given a stimulus to new and healthier forces. But, if the country has gained, the older parties have only sunk the faster. The Right is now, with a few exceptions, a party of pure reaction. The older

¹ See below, pp. 83-86.

men with their higher ideals and more liberal principles have died or drifted away in disgust, and the Right is composed of men whose interests or fears have made them hate and dread the whole democratic and social movement. There is (or at all events there was a year ago) the Court party, quite out of touch with the country, clinging desperately to its military policy, too timid to take in hand and guide, as it might do, the new popular forces. There are the noble families and bureaucrats, who were Bourbonists and Grandducalists, till they saw that the House of Savoy had come to stay and transferred themselves and their evil traditions to it. There are the local factions of the South, who now sell their support to the Right, as they used to sell it to the Left, on the understanding that the Government allows them rein to exploit the local councils and play the petty tyrant in their own towns. There are the great capitalists, especially of Milan and Genoa, who want a protectionist and anti-labour Government, and behind them stands the mass of the richer classes, who dread Socialism above all else. And so the policy of the party is a purely negative one,—to oppose Socialism in all its forms and whittle down the rights of Parliament, or, as perhaps they would prefer to put it, to defend property and strengthen authority. They would use the State not only to protect them from labour legislation, but to put money in the pockets of the rich. They are strong Protectionists, and when negotiations were proceeding in 1898 for the new commercial treaty with France,

they had to be conducted in secrecy for fear that a capitalist agitation might wreck them. They maintain a corn duty in the interest of the big landlords, who, it is estimated, have gained £60,000,000 from it; they prefer to tax food rather than increase the rates, and last year they unsuccessfully attempted to make the wages of the better-paid workman legally subject to income-tax.¹ They would gladly make all combinations of workmen illegal, and the notorious *decreto-legge* of 1899² was probably intended to be used as a weapon against trade-unions and co-operative societies. So great is their dread of all the newer developments of social thought, that one of their papers has asked that all university professors with unorthodox economic views should be dismissed, that the Moderate Municipal Council of Turin recently refused the use of a room for popular lectures on political economy, that even teachers of the arts are suspect if they hold advanced æsthetic views.

Men with these prejudices naturally distrust popular government. Especially since the disorders of 1898, there has been a strong feeling abroad among the richer classes that authority needs strengthening to protect themselves from revolution. They eat and sleep in dread of Socialist or Clericalist plots, and scent imaginary dangers to the Crown. And to protect the throne and society and their own pockets, they have two specifics. One is to increase the power of the Crown by removing the executive from Parliamentary control. No doubt the disbelief in

¹ See below, p. 139.

² See below, p. 103.

Parliament, a feeling that every Parliamentary Cabinet has blundered, a wish to purify Government by freeing it from dependence on the greedy factions in the Chamber, have helped to create the demand that the Crown should choose its Ministers. But the cry comes in the main from men who want to strengthen the executive as a defence against progressive forces; and since the new king has dissociated himself from a reactionary policy, their zeal for the throne has cooled. Their other specific is "a preventive system of repression," by law, if Parliament will do their bidding; by royal decree, if it will not. This was the spirit that called in 1898 for a *coup d'état*, for permanent martial law and the suppression of Socialist and Clericalist societies, and which afterwards took shape in the *decreto-legge*. It is almost certain that if General Pelloux had remained in office last year, he would have brought in a Bill to narrow the franchise; and ever since his fall his party have been crying for it.

A policy, which wishes to revoke liberties, some of which have had at least a tacit recognition for forty years, is sufficient proof of the utter lack of capacity that marks all the recent action of the Right. They have no glimmer of statesmanship, no wisdom, no dignity. They have totally misconceived the spirit of the country, its determination to have social and financial reform. "The people have public works to give employment, what more do the Socialists want?" they ask. They will have nothing to do with even the mildest reforms, if they figure on the Socialist programme, and thus they let the Socialists have the

credit of advocating changes that a wise Conservatism would hasten to take for its own. They put off the amnesty in 1898, till its concession had lost all grace, rather than seem to yield to popular pressure. They rely on their wealth and the electoral power it gives them, on the support of the Court (at all events, in the late reign), above all, on the army; and if they had a strong leader, they would drive Italy to revolution. But they have no capable man. The Marquis Visconti-Venosta is old, and absorbed in foreign politics. General Pelloux has been described as a glorified peasant, and his ministry was one long series of inconsistencies and blunders. The ablest man among them is Baron Sidney Sonnino, one of the few leading statesmen among the constitutional parties with clean hands, a rigid financier, fearless and disinterested, but narrow, timid in his policy, quite ignorant of the strength of the new movement, which he would like to stamp out with a heavy heel. It was his influence that controlled and held together Pelloux' majority, that more than anything else drove the late Premier to the follies of the *decreto-legge* and the struggle with the Extreme Left.

There is still a saner section of the Right, which has not forgotten the Cavourian tradition, which, though it regrets the extension of the franchise, would not attempt to narrow it, and would like to see a reform of taxation, the abolition of the duties on corn, economies in the army, and legislation in the interests of the poor. Their best exponent is Professor Villari, the historian, who says that there is little in the "mini-

mun programme" of the Socialists that any sensible man would not accept. But they have small influence, and are feebly represented in the Chamber by the little group that follows Di Rudinì. Di Rudinì is a wealthy Sicilian noble, who has been in politics since 1866, personally honest, one of the very few leading men who came unscathed out of the Bank scandals, in theory a Liberal and an enemy of corruption, but irresolute and weak, partly because he does not take the trouble to master details and commits himself to courses that he is afterwards obliged to give up, partly because he has no vigour to drive through opposition. When in office, he sinned against light, and his condescendence to the baser arts of Government did more to shake confidence in public honesty than all the effrontery of men of lower ideals. Last year, his group sided with the Left in opposing Pelloux' reactionary measures.

The "Constitutional Left," long divided into the Giolitti and Zanardelli groups, are now a fairly homogeneous party, keeping pretty steadily some 120 votes in the Chamber. Up to 1898 there was little to differentiate their policy from that of the Right; they had the same foreign programme, the same practical indifference to social reform, the same use of corruption. And though many of them were always Liberals at heart, they never had the courage or consistency to carry out their policy in office. The most smirched of Italian Premiers—Depretis, Crispi, Giolitti—all came from their ranks. Giolitti's relations to the Bank scandals ought to have driven him from public life. Though he is personally disinterested, he has been an

adept in political corruption, and even among Italian statesmen he bears no high name for scrupulousness. But he is a clever Parliamentarian, and has a certain bottom of democratic sympathy. There is no longer the same temptation to corrupt that there was in the days of his earlier ministry. At all events, he recognizes that only a policy of popular finance and social legislation can succeed in Italy to-day, and, as their most prominent champion, he will probably play a big part in the next few years. Zanardelli, whose following is mainly in the South, is one of the cleanest of Italian politicians and a consistent Liberal, but he is old and exhausted. Individually, the party is a strong one. Men like Signors Fortunato and Guicciardini, Alessio and Ferraris, are capable and high-principled men of true Liberal stuff. But though the party has recently been braced up by its defence of constitutional liberty, the majority are painfully anxious to dissociate themselves from the democratic successes at the last elections. Taking it in the lump, it is a timid, pessimistic group, which whines that, between revolution on the one side and reaction on the other, the country is doomed, and is inclined to despair of itself and Parliament and State. Its mistrust of itself is largely justified. The Right has still elements of strength in its wealth, its power over a corrupt electorate, its insistence on authority, perhaps in its hold on the army. But however useful may be the function of the Left at the present moment,¹ there is probably no permanent room for it; it is fated

¹ See below, pp. 108-110.

ultimately to drift to the Extreme Left or disappear. Italian politics are changing radically and swiftly. The struggle of the future will be between the lower-middle and working classes—the men with less than £200 a year—on the one hand, and the richer classes on the other. Hardier parties are springing up, with definite policies and the resolution to carry them through. Two great coalitions—the alliance of Socialists, Republicans, Radicals, and advanced Liberals,—and the party of authority—the capitalists, the army, the bulk of the Clericalists—will contest the future of Italy.

The present electoral law dates from 1882. Up to its passing the Italian franchise was in the main that of Charles Albert's Statute, and was limited to literates, who paid £1. 12s. 0d. in direct taxation, and to tradesmen and manufacturers possessing property of a certain value. The law of 1882 preserved the disqualification of illiteracy, but, subject to this, extended the vote to all who paid 15s. 10d. in direct taxes, to farmers paying a rent of £20, and to householders paying a rent graduating from £6 in villages to £16 in large towns. There are also fancy franchises in variety. A more recent law of 1895 has altered the rules for making the voting-lists, and has materially curtailed the number of electors. There have been single-member constituencies, except between 1882 and 1891, when the *scrutin de liste* was introduced in the vain hope of checking corruption. A candidate is not returned unless he has an absolute majority of votes; if no candidate obtains this, a second ballot takes place a

week later. At an election the presiding officer and scrutineers are chosen by the voters present. A polling-booth contains two square glass boxes on a table, one containing the voting papers, the other empty. A list of voters is read in alphabetical order; the voter comes forward when his name is called, and has a paper given him from the first box. He takes it to a table, writes the name of the candidate whom he votes for, folds it, and places it in the second box. When the list has been read through, any voter, who was not present when his name was called, may give his vote. The poll is normally open from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. Any elector or unsuccessful candidate can petition against a return; all petitions are decided by the Chamber on the report of a special Committee, sometimes with the grossest subordination of facts to partisanship.

The proportion of the population which has the vote is very small. Before 1882 it was only 2 per cent.; now it is a little over 7 per cent., as against 16 in Great Britain, 20 in Germany, 27 in France. The disqualification of illiteracy disfranchises a very large number, especially in the South and parts of the Centre. Indifference and the Papal *non expedit*¹ keep many from claiming a vote, and the Socialists are the only party that have any machinery to attend to registration. Even among the registered electors the proportion that goes to the poll is small, especially in the North; on the average of the whole country it ranges between 58 and 60 per cent. That comparatively so few should take the trouble to use their votes

¹ See below, p. 47.

is hardly to be wondered at. There was no strong popular demand for the extension of the franchise; and in spite of the recent revival, the mass of the people are still disillusioned, and well-nigh hopeless of reform. No party, except the Socialists, has a clear programme, or attempts to stir the voters at election times,¹ and it was regarded as phenomenal that at Alessandria in 1900 twenty meetings were held in one evening. The hard struggle for life, the absence of political education, makes the mass of the peasants indifferent whether they vote or not.

Of those who go to the poll, a more than normal proportion vote from irrelevant motives. It is true that the Socialists and Radicals have created a different spirit in the towns of the North, in a few places here and there in the Centre and South, and even in some country districts. It is probable, too, that last year the Left polled many votes from men who really cared about the constitutional struggle. The richer and middle classes as a whole have their party ties, and vote in obedience to them. But influence and bribery govern the rest. Peasants vote at their landlord's or employer's orders. The mortgaged small proprietors of the South obey the bidding of the bank that has their title-deeds. The elections at Naples are managed by a hundred or two of "influential electors," who use the *camorra* to carry their nominees. A candidate gets votes, as he would in any country, because he is an old man, or because he is a young man, or because he is

¹ Since the last elections, the Moderates of Milan have been projecting a popular organization with the familiar mixture of politics and philanthropy.

simpatico. And besides, and worse than this personal influence, governmental pressure and private bribery reach to monstrous proportions. The former is worst in the South, the latter in the North. But everywhere more or less the Prefects are used to "prepare" the elections, and if a Prefect refuses to work for the ministerial candidate, he is summarily removed, or, after the most decent custom of to-day, is temporarily suspended till the election is over. All his enormous power is exerted to return the Government's candidate. A Prefect once boasted that he could control all the elections in his province, as he could send all his Syndics to prison if necessary. In Crispi's day they would arrest electors on false charges on the eve of the elections and keep them in custody till the poll was over. In Sicily they have employed the *Mafia* gangs to terrorize the electors.¹

Newspapers are subsidized from the secret funds; school teachers are impressed to assist in canvassing; railway employees are warned, or, if influential Socialists, are removed to a distant post during the election; Syndics send round circulars officially recommending the ministerial candidate; policemen are stationed at the polling-booth to shut out opposition voters. In the recent Codronchi-De Felice libel case, an ex-Minister of Justice owned that the Sicilian police were a true "electioneering agency." Registers are tampered with in the revision courts. A teacher of literature has been known to be struck off as illiterate, and at Catania 5000 electors out of 9000, with university professors and lawyers

¹ See below, p. 122.

among them, were once removed at a single swoop. Two notorious instances, which almost parallel Galician elections, will illustrate how the system is worked in Sicily. In 1895, while Crispi was in office, an election was pending at Alcamo, and, in spite of tampering with the register, Damiani, the Ministerialist candidate, had small prospect of success. But a certain Saladino, an inhabitant of the town, was in prison on a charge of murder and forgery; and Saladino's many friends and connections were sufficiently numerous to turn the election. General Mirri, the chief official in the island, acting probably on Crispi's direct orders, went to Alcamo and struck the bargain. Saladino was to be released, and he was to secure Damiani's return. "Damiani," wrote the General, "must win at any cost, because Damiani means Crispi." The scandal of Alcamo had a worthy complement last year. The constituency of Corleone had the special attention of the Prefect. The police were sent round the villages to threaten the timid peasants that, if the Ministerialist candidate were defeated, they would be arrested in mass. A *Mafia* gang of notorious criminals were given a batch of licenses to carry firearms, that they and their friends might terrorize the electors. Syndics, schoolmasters, civil servants, municipal employees were warned to support the Prefect's candidate. Manœuvres like these were reported from all parts of Italy at the recent elections, and the climax of scandal was reached, when a secret circular ordered the telegraph officials to transmit no message relating to the elections until it had been seen by the Prefect. It is no wonder that

any Cabinet in a difficulty appeals to the country, knowing that the election will be a sufficient farce in enough constituencies to give it a majority. Bribery completes the work. It is not merely the abundant use of promises that the Government will show some special favour to the locality—a local railway, a water supply at its own expense, new barracks in the chief town, a ribbon or two for prominent supporters. Besides all this, there is hardy, unblushing corruption by Government and private persons. The electoral law, which punishes with fine and imprisonment any attempt at direct or indirect bribery, is a dead letter; and under Di Rudinì in 1892 a magistrate in Venetia, who wanted to prosecute in a case of notorious corruption, found his suit stopped and himself transferred to another post. The secret service funds of the Government go largely to this purpose. One of the causes that brought the Banca Romana low was the demand for loans made by successive Premiers, who wanted to swell their election funds. It is believed that Pelloux saved up £400,000 for electoral contingencies. In 1892, £8000 are said to have been spent in one constituency. At the elections of 1900 bribery seems to have been rampant both in North and South. At Catania 16s. are known to have been paid for a vote; at Corteolona in Piedmont 4s. to 20s. were paid; at Intra the price went down to sixpence. Occasionally a deputy is unseated for “extensive philanthropy” on the eve of an election, or for “corrupting nearly a whole constituency.” But, as a rule, it can be done with impunity, and even

when a Parliamentary Committee has recommended that a seat be voided for bribery, the Chamber has sometimes refused to take action. It is this sheer power of unscrupulous wealth that the advanced parties have to fight against more than anything else.

A Chamber elected by such methods is not likely to have a high character. Nothing strikes an observer more than the unimposing and undignified bearing of the Deputies. And though the thoroughly dishonest men are perhaps only a handful, a large number are, as we shall see, more or less in the pay of Government. The scandals of the Banca Romana are past history, but the country still thinks that there is an essential connection between politicians and speculators; and when Di Rudinì with his high professions did little to correct the disease, the suspicion grew, till an Italian to-day finds it difficult to believe that a politician can be disinterested. At all events, Parliament, outside the Extreme Left and to a certain extent the Left, represents the wealthier classes only. It is true that the great landlords, still more the capitalists, are less numerous than in the British Parliament. But the lawyers and other professional men, who constitute nearly two-thirds of the Chamber, mainly represent wealth, and even the Socialists have only returned two working-men.¹ "The Italian Parliament," says the *Giornale degli economisti*, "is an assembly of proprietors," with all such an assembly's

¹ Signor Rigola of Biella and Signor Chiesa of Sampierdarena. The first working-man deputy was Signor Antonio Maffi of Milan, now editor of the *Cooperazione Italiana*.

indifference to social legislation and insistence on the rights of property. "The organization of the Italian State," says Signor Franchetti, "is one great *clientèle*, and the peasants get no help, because they are not part of the *clientèle*."

The impotence of Parliament is increased by the absence of party organization. Owing to the non-representation of the Clericalists, there has been, outside the Extreme Left, no very vital difference of principle among the great majority of the Chamber. As a consequence, Parliament has been divided into groups, united by personal ties, and each fighting for its own hand. It has rarely been possible for a Ministry to keep in office by the support of one group, and ever since Depretis introduced the system of *trasformismo*, each one has copied his evil model of coalition Governments with weak and inconsistent programmes, propped by the bought support of groups. The result has been that "the Government has never governed Italy, for it has always confined itself to governing Parliament." It is an ill nursery for statesmen, for in the vicious circle of Italian politics there are no great parties to breed great statesmen or great statesmen to make great parties; and Italian statesmanship is a dreary waste of small intrigue and damaged character and narrow vision. But here, as in much else, the cure is coming from the Extreme Left. As the latter gains in strength, and the Right becomes more reactionary, deep differences of policy, constitutional and social, are dividing men, and the soil grows kinder for great parties.

At present, however, though perhaps not so much as a few years ago, these two primary defects—the poor personality of the Deputies and the absence of strong parties—make the Chamber a fair seed-plot of corruption. Parliamentary life is expensive. Not that elections cost a great deal; no estimate puts the average cost to a candidate above £200, and it is probably much less. An election at Aosta in the seventies cost a little over £3. But General Elections are numerous (there have been five since 1889), second ballots add to the cost, and there are few opportunities to make a living at Rome. There is a troop of “telegraphic Deputies,” who only come when summoned to take part in an important division. The ordinary Deputy, who shares the low level of Italian wealth, cannot attend to his Parliamentary duties without pecuniary help. The Italian Chamber is almost the only one on the Continent which has no payment of members, beyond their right to free passes on railways.¹ The lawyers and civil engineers who crowd into Parliament expect some help from Government in return for clean or dirty work. In the days of Depretis or Giolitti the Ministerialist Deputy was paid by an introduction to the Banca Romana, which advanced him money without interest or security or much hope of repayment. Now he is given some minor office, or sent on a commission abroad, or, if a lawyer or civil engineer, gets well-paid Govern-

¹ There is no payment of members in Spain and the German Imperial Reichstag. It is permissive in Portugal. In Germany and Portugal members are allowed free passes on railways.

*Since 1912 Italian deputies receive
annually 6,000 lire. £1200 plus plenty*

ment work. An ex-President of the Chamber is freely reported to have received £2000 a year for expert opinions and arbitrations in which the Government was concerned. A prominent Deputy informed us last year that more than half the Chamber were directly or indirectly in the pay of the Government.

A yet more unsavoury relation exists between the Government and certain financial and commercial interests in the Chamber. In Depretis' time the evil was gigantic. "The Deputy and the man of business were two sides of the same person ; politics made business and business made politics." As late as 1896 the then Minister of Public Works told the Chamber that "the skill with which contractors had marched to the conquest of public money was only matched by the laxity of the defence." At that time railway contractors were claiming from the Treasury nearly £6,000,000 for extras, where £1,400,000 were found to be fair payment. Probably there is much less of the evil now ; the cutting down of public works affords fewer opportunities of advantageous contracts, and it is illegal now, as then, for a Deputy to take a contract from Government ; the reaction against protection makes it difficult to get new bounties or protective duties in favour of particular interests. But still defrauding bank directors go unpunished, and the long immunity of Notarbartolo's murderers¹ was due to the anxiety of men in high places not to lift any corner of the veil that hangs over the Bank scandals. Only last year a notorious job was perpetrated in the in-

¹ See below, p. 123.

terest of the big shipping companies. In November 1899 it was decided to reduce from the 14th of the month the bounties to the mercantile marine. As soon as this was decided, impossible schedules of newly laid down ships were declared for the six weeks preceding that date. It was obvious that fraudulent returns had been made to obtain the higher bounties given under the expiring Act, and the new Bill was made retrospective so as to come into operation at the beginning of October. But a few months later, when the Pelloux Government was at the point of going out, they threw over the Bill, and by royal decree struck out the retrospective clause, putting, it is calculated, over £1,600,000 into the pockets of the shipowners at the expense of the Treasury. The Saracco Ministry, however, referred the whole question back to the Chamber.

There is another form of corruption which strikes at the root of good government. The executive often allows Southern Deputies and their cliques immunity in their petty local tyrannies and peculations, on condition that they keep the seats safe and vote for Government. A recent libel action has shown how a Deputy of Naples, by grace of the Government and the *Camorra*, lived luxuriously by the systematic jobbery of public offices and favours, how the authorities connived, how, though his conduct was notorious, no one dared to stand in his way, till the Socialists exposed him and drove him to resign. Charities are manipulated for party purposes. Communal property is jobbed in the interest of the local magnate, and there is no

remedy. Criminal actions for embezzlement of communal funds are suppressed. Under Crispi the *domicilio coatto*¹ was used to imprison the political opponents of the "provincial Don Rodrigos." A Prefect sends the list of retiring Syndics to his Deputy, to ask whom he shall reappoint. Prefects themselves are removed or have their work upset at the demand of Senators and Deputies. For much of this, no doubt, the public is responsible. "A Deputy," wrote one of them in 1886, "has to find posts for people, secure verdicts for his supporters alike in civil and criminal cases, help others to pass their examinations or get pensions, promote or oppose public and private contracts. He has to get convicts released, civil servants punished or removed, obtain roads and bridges for his constituency." The great mass of the educated unemployed are hungry for posts in the Civil Service, and expect the Deputy to procure them. Every small local magnate wants to be a *commendatore* or a *cavaliere*, and even a Socialist Deputy has been known to beg a ribbon for a supporter. "Italy," said an ex-Premier, "is governed by decorations." But an honest Government could, if it liked, check a disease which makes good administration impossible, and the Chamber should have done more than applaud, when a Deputy told it in 1896 that the Government was the great spring of the corruption in the provinces.

It is easy, however, to exaggerate the extent of the corruption. No Parliament is free from it. At all events, the Italian Chamber has fewer Parliamentary

¹ See below, p. 86.

guinea-pigs than the House of Commons, perhaps because there are fewer opportunities for company promotion; there is far less manipulation of tariffs for private ends than in the United States, no more bribery of localities than in Canada. Things are better already than they were in the days of Depretis and Crispi; public opinion, at all events in the North, is making steadily for political purity; the Socialists are doing a fine work in exposing the worst scandals, and if the Extreme Left become strong enough to carry payment of members, they will raise the morality of the Deputies all round. The Chamber has its virtues; each new Parliament has started with excellent intentions, which have failed for want of cohesiveness and leading. It has sometimes been more liberal than the country; it is generally more liberal than the Government. It stopped the San-Mun blunder;¹ it might have stopped the Tigré expedition,² if Crispi had not prorogued it to give himself a free hand. It has erred rather from timidity and self-effacement. It has only since the last elections dared to make any thorough and effective criticism of the budget; it has allowed the Government, through its royal decrees, an extra-parliamentary power of legislation, of which our departmental orders and "opinions of the law-officers of the Crown" are but a pale reflection. From 1892 onwards to last year almost every ministerial crisis has come from influences outside its walls. It is learning its power now. The cry against Parliamentary institutions—so much in vogue in Italy of late—is a foolish one. If the governing

¹ See below, p. 309.

² See below, p. 306.

classes, instead of railing at the Chamber, tried to purify it, they would serve their country better. They are powerless to weaken it. Italy will in the future be governed by its Parliament more and not less than in the past.

Of the Senate it is unnecessary to say much. It is a piece of almost unused machinery, neglected by everybody, and quite without influence on the national life. It will probably linger on for a time, but as a political factor, it counts and will count for very little. Will the same fate befall the monarchy? Here we have a double set of phenomena. On the one hand the old enthusiasm for the House of Savoy is waning fast; on the other, the republican movement, handed down from Mazzini, has spent its force. The prestige and popularity of the throne, so great under Victor Emmanuel II., fell low under Humbert. The late king had none of his father's force of character or knowledge of men. He moved in a narrow Court circle, and listened to men and women who were quite out of touch with the country. He loved to manœuvre with parties and form little cabals, always more interested in small Parliamentary tactics than in broad views of policy. The only point on which he took a strong line was the maintenance of the Triple Alliance and a large army, partly because he wanted Italy to play the part of a Great Power, partly because he dreaded an attack from France and an Italian Sedan, which would be fatal to his dynasty. His personal character did not strengthen his position. He was physically fearless, like all his House; he fought

bravely at Custozza and faced danger in the cholera epidemic at Naples. He was always genial and good-natured. But palace scandals tainted his repute as they did his father's; and even the Conservatives had small respect for him. "Monarchy is an excellent institution when there is a monarch," a Conservative Count is reported to have said. To the Democrats he was the head of a faction, the centre of all the reactionary interests, of the army, of the big landlords and capitalists. Whatever truth there may have been in this, he certainly had no sympathy with the new social movement. Though in a way he was true to the nationalist and constitutional policy of his House, and could talk like a Democrat at times, he was thoroughly alarmed at the progress of the Extreme Left. The African disaster, the discredit of Government, the movement against a large army, the uneasiness of the whole country, all reacted on his popularity. And though up to the last he was received with wild demonstrations of loyalty at Naples and elsewhere, it was largely from love of a brave show, and even in Piedmont, the home of his dynasty, there was no real enthusiasm for him. On the other hand, for some years past there has been little or no active disloyalty to the Crown. The social movement has thrown all questions of the form of government into the background, and even the Socialists are prepared to accept the monarchy, if they can have a fair field for their policy under it.

Of the present king, Victor Emmanuel III., it is too early yet to say much, but what little is known of

him, is mostly to his good. He has been carefully, too carefully educated, and at one time he suffered from over-study. He has the tastes of an old man or a bookworm, but he is a keen student of history and economics. His politics, so far as he has declared them, are thoroughly Liberal, and he seems to have kept surprisingly clear of the prejudices of his father's Court. He was no friend of Crispi, and it is rumoured that he wanted him to be prosecuted after the Bank revelations. He was opposed to the recent policy of coercion, and since his accession he has bravely refused to have any reaction, in spite, no doubt, of considerable pressure. He probably favours a comprehensive social programme. He is a hard and conscientious worker, with a high ideal of his kingly office, and demanding the same thoroughness and diligence in his Ministers. It is said that he is firm, and if he has sufficient physical strength and force of character, his Liberal sympathies may allow him to recover the ground that his father lost. At all events, the fate of the Italian monarchy is in its own keeping. If it takes in hand the social movement, as it took in hand the national movement, it has one of the safest thrones in Europe. If it sets itself against progress, if it stands for reaction, for a heavy military expenditure and an adventurous foreign policy, it is doomed, and perhaps at no distant date.

CHAPTER II

THE CATHOLICS

- A. CATHOLIC POLITICS.—Strength of the Catholics. The Catholic revival. Leo XIII. The Temporal Power. The Law of Guarantees. Chances of compromise. The Papacy and France. The *non expedit*. Growth of conciliatory feeling. Catholic-Moderate alliance.
- B. THE SOCIAL WORK OF THE CATHOLICS.—Catholic Socialism. The Congresses. The Christian Democrats.

WE turn from the old parties, with their policies of despair, to the two that, at all events, have faith and principle and enthusiasm—the Catholics and the Socialists. It is extremely difficult to estimate the strength of the Catholics with any approach to accuracy. Italian estimates on both sides are so obscured by party feeling that it is unsafe to give much credence to them. “Catholic” itself needs defining. There is a sense, of course, in which the immense majority of Italians are Catholics, as being neither Protestants nor Greeks nor Jews. Or the term may be limited to the *praticanti*, who regularly observe Catholic precepts of worship. A still narrower use of the word (its common sense in Italian politics) includes those only who obey the Pope in all matters, spiritual or civil, in which he prescribes the rule of Catholic conduct. Any estimate of Catholic strength must try to answer the question how far the two latter categories are conterminous. Both, no doubt, have very sensibly declined during the past half-century. The

Vatican's hostility to Italian Unity, the difficulty of being good Italians and good Catholics at once, the strides of indifferentism, the general secularization of life—all these have driven large numbers from the Church. In an old conventual building at Turin some students have established a "laboratory of political economy." Outside the room is still a fresco of the Crucifixion; inside are fresco portraits of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. The transition is typical of many things in Italian life. These influences have naturally affected the educated classes most of all, and there can be hardly any doubt, from the confession of the Catholics themselves, that Catholicism has small hold on them. The professional classes and the great majority of university students are, and have been for many years, either indifferent or anticlerical. So strong is the set of opinion among them, that Deputies, who go to mass at home and send their children to the Catholic schools, dare not do so at Rome. The artisans of the North are more divided; here and there, at Bergamo, in particular, the Catholics have a large following, but in those towns where Socialism is strong they are fast losing ground. "Where the Socialist halls fill, the churches empty," said a priest from Biella at a recent Catholic Congress. At Milan, once a Catholic stronghold, their voting strength at the local elections declines rapidly, and is now less than one-third of the Socialist poll. At Rome the Liberals, when they are united, can always defeat them. Even at Bergamo, "while the Catholics make no effort," says the organ of the Catholic Social Union there, "the Socialists are gaining ground and

take the working men and women from us." Among the peasants their forces are more considerable, but even here they are weakening in many parts. The reports of the *Inchiesta agraria* in 1883 are about equally divided on the point whether religion is declining in the country districts. The influence of the village schoolmaster and doctor, the freer ideas of the returned conscripts, sometimes sap the priest's influence. In the villages of Emilia and Romagna the Socialists are fighting the ground inch by inch, and many a little town is distracted by the clubs and societies and bands of the rival forces. But generally, though the peasant has small regard for the priest, he is a devout Catholic none the less. In many parts of the North and Centre, and sometimes, as near Bari, in the South, the peasant's faith is a sincere and manly piety. There are large districts where the priest's authority is still unchallenged. Often he is the peasant's only friend, who does his business for him, helps him in time of sickness, and has that intimate social tie with him that he has in Ireland. In the South there is a good deal of gross superstition, and everywhere there is many a farmer who thinks "that a priest's blessing does the crops more good than a hundred manurings." Probably the great majority of peasants should still be counted as Catholics. Of 250,000 who petitioned last year against the Civil Marriage Bill, 85 per cent. belonged to them.

And side by side with the indifferentism or hostility of the educated classes and the towns, there is a remarkable outburst of Catholic activity. In outward

appearance Catholicism has never been stronger. New churches spring up. Monasteries, evading the Dissolution Law by vesting their property in trustees, perhaps are as numerous and wealthy, certainly are more active than in pre-dissolution days. The younger clergy, at all events in the towns of the North, are busy, proselytizing, full of good works. Their humanitarian zeal, that has scattered broadcast cooperative banks and other agencies, has strengthened their hold on the peasants, even to some extent on the artisans. "One can go into a workman's shop now without being insulted," says the priest of Murano. Meanwhile the monastic orders have grown at the expense of the secular clergy, thanks to their wealth and grip of business methods and advertisement; the Vatican has done its best to stamp out any sign of liberal thought among the clergy; and both tendencies increase, at all events for the moment, the efficacy of the Church as a fighting instrument, though below the surface there are many heart-burnings between the nationalist and intransigent clerics. The endowments of the new monasteries prove how much money is coming in to it from private gifts and bequests. There is an active and bitter Catholic press. Catholic schools attract the children of the upper and middle classes, probably with good reason, more than the Government's lyceums and gymnasiums. Imposing crowds of pilgrims go to Rome in the Holy Year of 1900. Among these contradictory marks of strength and weakness, it is natural that both clericalists and freethinkers should claim to have gained ground. It is more and more difficult to stand aside

or take a middle ground. The Reformed Catholic movement, so promising in the early sixties, has almost entirely disappeared; Protestantism, in spite of zeal and devotion, makes little headway. And so probably both clericals and freethinkers have gained. Which-ever side has gained most, at all events the Catholic Church in Italy still gives the impression of a mighty force, strong in its discipline, strong in its able leading, strong often in its good works, strong above all in the weakness of the existing system of government.

At its head stands that very remarkable man, to whom it largely owes its recent development in Italy, its yet more marked advance in other Catholic countries. When Leo XIII. succeeded Pio Nono in 1878, he found almost every Government in Europe alienated by his predecessor's want of tact and statesmanship. In Germany the Kulturkampf was at its worst; in France Macmahon's power was shaken, and the anti-clericals were in the ascendant; in Bavaria the Government was encouraging the Old Catholics; there had been a diplomatic rupture with Russia in protest against the persecution of the Catholic Poles. The Papacy stood hardly stronger with the peoples. There had been a good deal of Catholic enthusiasm for "the prisoner of the Vatican," but Pius' dislike of every progressive movement kept the masses aloof and suspicious. Leo probably owed his election to a small group of high ecclesiastics, who dreaded a continuance of the obscurantism of the last pontificate, and who skilfully enlisted the European press on Leo's behalf, and won for him the vote of the non-Italian

Cardinals. The latter wanted to see Pius' hostility to Italy maintained, though with more skill and suavity, but they saw that it was essential to conciliate the other Governments of Europe. To this policy the Pope has been faithful.

Leo XIII.'s acts and words give the impression of one who, at all events till lately, has been a strong but not a very strong man, with very fixed ideas, with great industry and command of details, a good man, but more statesman than saint, without any deep affection or spirituality. In his doctrine and in his general view of society he is a reactionary, but with a real sympathy for the poor, and a considerable understanding of economic conditions. His breadth of social views is marred by a mastering dread of Socialism, whose economic side he entirely fails to understand, and which, with more justice, he regards as a very dangerous enemy of Catholicism. He believes with all sincerity that there is a great secret conspiracy against the Catholic Church and all religion, which centres in the Freemasons; and his encyclicals have a common note of pessimism, which teaches that all authority is in peril, and that men can be saved only by coercion from error and license. Society must be safeguarded from impending ruin by restoring to the Papacy something of its medieval plenitude of power. His great belief, says Padre Brandi, is that it is the mission of the Church not only to redeem souls, but to save human society. The gist of the encyclical *Immortale Dei* is that truth is one and all-embracing, that the Church teaches the only truth,

that if it is excluded from authority over domestic life, from the schools, from a voice in legislation, false doctrines will imperil the welfare of the race. He calls for a union of Church and State, that men may not be distracted between their duties to the two authorities; but the Catholic Church is to be the chief gainer from the alliance. Not only is it and its property to be free from State control, not only is it to have power to enforce its own laws, but he claims for it a voice in the making of the civil law, a legal pre-eminence over other religious bodies, a right to the State's help in suppressing the propagation of false opinions.¹ The Church will repay the State by its alliance in combating Democracy and Socialism. Leo finds himself in a dilemma when he preaches obedience to authority, while himself attacking the Italian State; but none the less he not only condemns any movement which may disturb the public tranquillity, but he attacks the whole structure of popular government. Laws, he says, must not be made "according to the erring judgment of the masses." He admits indeed, inconsistently, that the republic is a legitimate form of government, but he believes firmly in coercion, and the whole bias of his argument is in favour of the powers that be. And he is insistent that Church and State must fight together against Socialism. While the State is to suppress all Socialist propaganda, the Church, through its power over the minds of men, cuts Socialism at its roots; and Leo appeals to the State to make the Church free and strong to oppose the common enemy.

¹ Encyclicals *Immortale Dei*, *Libertas*, *Humanum genus*, *passim*.

Leo has probably seen from the first that to strengthen the Church it was necessary to gain the confidence alike of Governments and peoples. But during the first years of his pontificate he directed his energies almost exclusively to winning the former. To get the good-will of European statesmen, he was prepared to make very large and, from the Catholic point of view, dangerous concessions. In France he recognized the Republic, and again and again turned his cheek to the anti-clerical smiter. In Germany he closed the Kulturkampf, and forced the Centre to support Bismarck as the price of the repeal of the May Laws. In Bavaria he made his peace with the Government over the grave of the Old Catholics. To win the good-will of Russia, he sacrificed the Catholic Poles; to win that of England, he condemned the National League. The policy, carried through with supreme skill, succeeded in its immediate object. But it had its drawbacks. The militant Catholics of France and Germany were indignant at the forced surrender to the enemy. The masses looked with suspicion at the alliance with the Governments. Leo saw that his work was too one-sided, and made it his business to win the peoples. "Catholic Socialism" was already strong in France and Germany and Belgium, in Austria and Switzerland. There was little of Socialism in it beyond its name, but it had a very earnest and thorough social policy, that appealed strongly to Leo, all the more because on its political side it was reactionary. He had already, before he became Pope, attacked the orthodox economy and advocated legislation to protect women and children.

But the first unequivocal sign of his social programme was in 1888, when, at the earnest prayer of the American bishops, he gave his sanction to the Knights of Labour. Three years later he published his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which analyses with great acuteness the inhumanities of capitalism, but lacks precision in its economic programme, and hardly proposes more than what has long been law in England. But it is gentler in its tone, less critical and negative than the earlier denunciations of Socialism; and all Europe recognized how great a fact it was that a Pope had ranged himself on the side of social reform. Admirers, Catholic and Protestant, raised his pronouncement to an evangel that went far beyond its intentions, and Leo was saluted as "the working man's Pope." And though the encyclical has entirely failed to stem the advance of Socialism, though it has not even united the progressive Catholics, while it has angered the Conservatives, and of late years the Pope himself has seemed afraid of his own boldness,¹ yet none the less it has helped to make his position a very powerful one in Europe.

There can be little doubt that all through his bold and clever policy Leo XIII. has had in mind the recovery of the Temporal Power. The view that in his earlier years of rule he was willing to abandon it has little evidence; and, at all events, since the insults to Pio Nono's corpse in 1881, he has kept it ever in

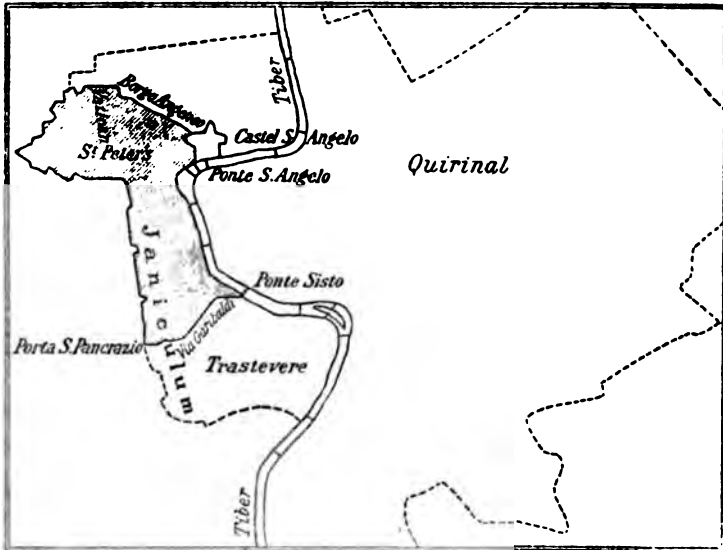
¹ The recent encyclical (January 18, 1901) is practically a condemnation of the "Christian Democrats." It expressly attacks any policy which, "in seeking the advantage of the lower classes, . . . neglects the upper classes, which are equally important for the preservation and perfection of society;" and it insists that the social work of Catholics must be "absolutely under episcopal guidance."

sight. His environment at the Vatican would hardly allow him to do otherwise. The few comparatively Liberal Cardinals, like Capececiattolo and some of the Anglo-Saxons and Irish, have little influence at Rome; those who, like the late Padre Tosti of Montecassino or Bishop Bonomelli of Cremona, preached the abandonment of the temporal claim, have been compelled to retract; the Jesuit influence is every year more strong, and the Jesuits put the recovery of the Temporal Power in the front of their programme. Again and again Leo has protested that there can be no peace with Italy till his territorial independence is restored; he still refuses to recognize a king of Italy, and does his best to weaken the Italian State; he has intrigued at one time with Bismarck, at another time with France, to apply foreign pressure in the interest of the Temporal Power;¹ he has successfully prevented the visit of any Catholic sovereign to Rome; he has allowed Cardinal Parocchi, as lately as 1898, to talk of a popular crusade, which should "break the chains of Peter"; he has marshalled, so far as he has been able, the whole Catholic Church in Italy to the same end.

But he and the Vatican have modified their earlier views. Time has softened the unholy bitterness, the passion for revenge, that dominated the Curia in Pio Nono's day. There is no longer the talk, so common in the seventies and eighties, that Italy is on the eve of disruption, that *qui mange du Pape en meurt*. The Vatican has nearly, or quite abandoned the schemes

¹ See below, p. 290.

of federation, which were intended to break up or impair Italian Unity. They have, except perhaps for a few obstinate *intransigenti*, abandoned all thought of returning to the *status quo ante* 1870, or even of recovering the whole of Rome. We have reason to believe, on excellent authority, that the Vatican is



MAP OF LEONINE CITY.

----- Boundary of Modern Rome

prepared to acquiesce in the possession of most of Rome by the Italian Government, but claims the Leonine City¹ in full sovereignty, under the guarantee of the European Powers, and asks that, to avoid the juxtaposition of two capitals in one city, the Italian

¹ The Leonine City embraces the Vatican, St. Peter's, and part of the Janiculum. It is bounded on the north by the Borgo Angelico and the walls of the Vatican; on the west by the city boundary; on the south by the Via di Porta San Pancrazio, and the Via Garibaldi; on the east by the Tiber.

Government shall make Florence or some other city its official seat and capital. On these terms, it is prepared to make peace.

Compared with the claims of twenty years ago, the demand is a modest one. But the Catholic position remains in substance the same. It is essential, the Catholics urge, that the spiritual father of a universal Church should be absolutely and ostentatiously free in the exercise of his spiritual acts; that not only there should be no possibility of pressure from the Italian Government, but not even the suspicion of its possibility, that no foreigner may say that the Pope is "a chaplain of the House of Savoy." Therefore he must have some obvious, material token of independence, some territorial franchise, however small. The Italians answer that the Pope's liberty and independence are secured by the Law of Guarantees. That part of the Law, which treats of the Pope's position, confirms him in the prerogatives of sovereignty, declares his person to be inviolable, punishes attacks and libels on it as attacks on the king, guarantees him the enjoyment of the Vatican and Lateran palaces, with the suburban retreat of Castel Gandolfo and an annual dotation of £125,000,¹ allows no officer of justice to enter their precincts, and gives the Pope special postal and telegraphic facilities, that his correspondence with the Catholic world may be free. The Catholics object, in the first place, that the Law has not been observed.

¹ This is annually credited to the Pope, but any unclaimed arrears revert to the State at each Pope's death. In 1890, £2,560,000 were credited to Leo XIII.

They base the charge in the main on the insults to Pius IX.'s corpse, when it was translated from the Vatican in 1881, and on the Martinucci case in the following year. The first was more a matter of mismanagement than of deliberate neglect. The authorities promised to keep order on condition that the body was translated quietly, but their precautions were inadequate, and when a procession of several thousands followed and shouted for the Pope-king, some bystanders, stung by the Clericalist defiance, hissed and insulted the procession. The Martinucci case defined the nature of the Pope's sovereignty. The courts decided that, apart from the Pope, every inmate of the Vatican is subject to the Italian law and is liable to be cited before the Italian courts, and that the Papal sovereignty is purely honorary and concerns only the spiritual side of his office. Whatever may be the facts as to the second part of the Law of Guarantees, which defines the relations of Church and State,¹ the Catholic contention as to the non-observance of that part which affects the Pope is singularly weak. The Conclave of 1878 was by general confession absolutely free, thanks to Crispi's energetic measures. Year after year demonstrations against the Italian Kingdom have been allowed with impunity at St. Peter's. Lately, during the celebration of the Holy Year, the Government outstepped the law to suppress anti-clerical demonstrations at Rome. If the Pope does not drive through the streets of the city, it is more because he shrinks from what might

See below, p. 252.

seem to be a recognition of the Government than because he fears the attacks or hisses of anti-clericals. Never has the Pope been more free from outward pressure or interference than have been Pius IX. and Leo XIII. since 1870.

But, the Catholics urge, even granted that the Law of Guarantees has been observed in the past, what security is there that it will be observed in the future? A Government, which is not loyal to its own fundamental Statute, cannot, they say, be trusted to keep faith with a power that it has no love for. And if it falls, the Revolution would have small scruple in breaking the pledges of the monarchy. But it is fair to reply that, so far as human prevision can go, no other system promises greater security; that the Law of Guarantees has been pronounced by the Council of State to be a fundamental law; that from fear of foreign complications the Italian Government is, and probably always will be, anxious to prove that the Pope's liberty is secure under its rule. Even if the Pope possessed the Leonine City in full sovereignty, the Italian Government would still have the prerogatives of neighbourhood, and perhaps exercise through the Italian Cardinals that real controlling influence, which the Papalists profess to be the danger of the present system. An international guarantee would go to pieces in the first great European war. A revolution might take as little heed of territorial rights or threats of foreign interference as of the Law of Guarantees.

At bottom the question is one of sentiment more than of practical grievance. To many Catholics it

seems a humiliation that the Pope should no longer be master of Rome ; that he should be subject to petty rebuffs from an unfriendly Government ; that a Protestant propaganda should be tolerated in his neighbourhood ; that no religious processions should be allowed in the streets ; that a Pope cannot be crowned at St. Peter's, or go to any celebration there, till he has asked the Government, as a favour, to send soldiers to police the approaches. And it is a sentiment that is felt more by foreign than by Italian Catholics. It is true that in Austria and Hungary there is a reaction of the native episcopacy against the political policy of the Vatican, and this tends to relax foreign interest in the Temporal Power. But to many of the French Catholics, at all events, it is still intolerable that the Pope should be in any degree subordinate to Italy ; the foreign cardinals perhaps fear that a reconciliation with Italy would increase the power of their Italian brothers at their own expense ; there are Governments that gladly foment a quarrel which weakens Italy. To this foreign sentiment the Vatican is bound to make a show of deference, not only because of its Catholic position, but because its funds come largely from France, and peace with Italy or any acceptance of the Italian dotation would stop the stream of French liberality. "A Pope," said Émile Ollivier, "who was reconciled to Italy, would lose the rest of the world." And so the Pope still calls on the Catholic Governments to relieve him from an intolerable position ; and the solemn comedy is played for the benefit of foreign

Catholics. But his claim, half unreal though it is, has its serious side, and the Italians are bound to take it into account. Any likelihood, however, that they will accept the Papal terms, except under compulsion, may be dismissed. Italy has its sentiment too; and if the monarchy ignored it, it would be wrecked at once. The great mass of Italian opinion, Conservative and Democratic alike, would accept no solution that implied the humiliation of abandoning Rome, or sacrificed it to the commercial disaster, the poverty and depopulation, which, as the Clericalists themselves recognize, would follow the departure of Court and Government. Even if the Vatican waived the transference of the capital, it would be difficult for either Monarchy or Parliament to tolerate an independent sovereign power sitting at its elbow, one who, as such, might ask for a French garrison and make a conflict with France almost inevitable. The close neighbourhood of an area, where liberty of worship and the press were forbidden, or which might become an asylum for political refugees, would be a cause of ever-recurring friction.

The Vatican recognizes that any compromise is barely within the range of possibility. How then do those, who really want the Temporal Power, propose to compel the State to surrender it? At one time, at all events, when it hoped to regain the whole Papal States, as they stood before 1870, it looked to reach its end by foreign pressure, and, if needful, by foreign arms. There was a period when Leo no doubt hoped that Bismarck would repay him for his concessions by

threatening Italy.¹ It has, however, been chiefly on France that the intransigents have based their hopes. Ever since 1871, when Thiers threatened that it was only France's weakness that kept her from interfering, there has been a party there for restoring the Temporal Power by force of arms. And at one time there were men at the Vatican, who would have welcomed a Franco-Italian war with all its horrors, oblivious or careless that it would have meant the irreparable ruin of Catholicism in Italy. Padre Zocchi, a Jesuit, in a book regarded by Catholics as more or less authoritative, wrote in 1884 that he "who entered Rome with gunshot will never leave except for gunshot," and that the Pope's independence would probably be secured only by war, "which, after all, is the means which Providence has always chosen hitherto." The still more authoritative *La verità intorno alla questione romana*, whose first edition was published at the Vatican Press, hints with equal confidence at war in the interest of the Papacy.² Leo himself expressly repudiated the militant ambitions of the latter book; but he, too, has evidently counted on French pressure. There is no other possible explanation of his persistent attempts to wreck the Triple Alliance, which, as he told Monsignor d'Hulst in 1893, he considered the chief obstacle to the restoration of the Temporal Power. It is difficult to say how far the policy prevails now. The Pope's Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla, still

¹ Chiala, *La triplice e la duplice alleanza*, 492-93, 730-36.

² Zocchi, *Papa e re* (ed. 2), 190, 207; B. O. S., *La verità intorno alla questione romana* (ed. 9), 37, 46.

assiduously courts the French Government; but there is an increasing restiveness inside the Vatican at a policy, which concedes everything to French anti-clericalism for the sake of a problematical return. Rampolla himself is now charged with feeding the French with promises and shadows. The Oriental missions are less exclusively in French hands since the appointment of a German as head of the Franciscan orders. Cardinal Ledochowski, who as Prefect of the Propaganda is very powerful, strongly opposes a pro-French policy, and even if the Vatican still desires it, the force of events tells fatally against French intervention. The relations between France and Italy have much improved during the last three years. In the contest for colonial expansion, diplomatists have no ears for the Pope's griefs, and the day for a third French expedition to Rome is past.

There remains the alternative of pressure from within. It is a passive hostility, for the theory of a Clericalist plot three years ago, with or without the alliance of Republicans and Socialists, has no tittle of evidence to support it. The policy shapes itself in an attempt to weaken and discredit the State by the disciplined abstention of Catholics from Parliamentary life. In the words of the Catholic apologists, it is a standing protest against a state of things which denies the Pope his liberty. Besides, it helps to satisfy foreign Catholics, and the Vatican knows well that if Italian Catholics took their part in politics, they would soon cease to care for the Temporal Power. The veto was formulated in 1883 by the Sacred

Penitentiary, which pronounced that it was inexpedient that Catholics should vote at Parliamentary elections, though it added that all the circumstances should be considered before voting necessarily became a sin. In 1895 the Pope expressly forbade Catholics to vote, and the inexpedient (*non expedit*) became unlawful. If the rule had been generally obeyed, it would have been a serious danger to the State. But it attempted the impossible. Wiser men, like Manning, always protested against it. The mass of thinking Catholic Italians, who care for their country and have no wish to see the work of Unity undone, resent it more and more. It seems to them mere pique to sulk in their tents, while there are questions of more pressing moment to fight for in Parliament—religious education, the marriage law, the struggle against Socialism, perhaps some modification of the Law of Guarantees. Some of the more democratic accept with ill-grace what seems a slight to representative institutions. The priests, especially in the South, often have close ties with the authorities, and look to the Deputy for favour or promotion.¹ Catholic nobles sigh for invitations to Court, middle-class Catholics want their share of public office. Bribery and landlord influence often have more weight than the veto of the priest. And so the policy of abstention has very largely broken down. The almost unanimous evidence of men of all parties goes to show that, always excepting the Catholic stronghold in the province of Bergamo, the *non expedit* is little observed, especially in the

¹ See below, p. 261.

South. There is no Papal veto on voting at municipal elections, and yet the proportion that goes to the poll does not greatly differ in the two cases. In 1895, 63 per cent. of the registered electors voted in the local elections ; in the last three Parliamentary elections 58 to 59 per cent. voted, and in the greater part of the Centre and South the proportion was higher in the latter than in the former. It is true that in a few cases, as at Novara and Rovigo, where the Extreme Left carried their candidates at the last Parliamentary elections, the Clericalist vote enabled the Moderates to carry the local elections shortly afterwards. It is said that many Catholics abstain on principle from claiming a Parliamentary vote ; but it is impossible to test the statement, and at Bergamo, at all events, the Catholics have been careful to be placed on the register. On the whole, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that both abstention and non-registration are due much more to indifference than to obedience to the Pope's veto.¹ At the recent elections the *non expedit* seems to have been less than ever observed. There is little doubt that the Pope was asked to waive it, and refused. Strenuous appeals were made to the Catholics not to vote, but the anxiety to defeat the Socialists was too strong. Many felt with the Turin Clerical, who said that no Papal veto could prevent him from carrying water when the house was on fire. A priest in the diocese of Cremona, Don Boldori, worked

¹ Probably sometimes to temporary migration ; at Zogno, where the proportion of voters was lowest at the last election, four-fifths of the male population are said to migrate in search of work every year.

hard and openly to defeat the Socialist candidate, in order "to check the irreligion and immorality" which followed the spread of Socialism. Though the democratic Catholic press attacked the Conservatives, many other Catholic papers urged their readers to vote for them. At Palermo a church was lent for the Conservative committee-room; at Turin, at Lecco, in Liguria, probably in a large number of Northern constituencies, in a still larger number in the South, the Catholics, often their priests, worked and voted for the Ministerialist candidates. Don R. Murri has estimated that the Catholic vote turned the scale against the Extreme Left candidates in twenty constituencies. Even in the province of Bergamo the abstentions went down from 71 to 65 per cent.

The *non expedit* has failed to bring the State to its knees. All this tends to peace. No doubt there are still many irreconcilables on both sides. There are men in the Curia, mostly Spanish and South Italians, who, like Zola's Cardinal Boccanera,¹ rather than yield, would have the Church "die standing in its glorious integrity, conceding nothing, abandoning nothing, fearing nothing;" who, in the words of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, boast that the "spirit of Catholicism" is "the spirit of the middle ages," and still regard the Government as an agent of Freemasonry, bent on the extirpation of religion. There is the almost intolerable

¹ Cardinal Boccanera is the only character in Zola's *Rome* which at all corresponds to any original. Critics of all schools are agreed in regarding the bulk of the book as quite untrustworthy. M. Zola spent fifteen days in Rome to get up his local colour, and most of the book was written before his visit.

provocation of men, who challenge the State by stenciling the walls at election time with "Long live Leo XIII.; Catholic electors, do not vote to-day." There is the childish temper of bishops, who won themselves a gratuitous unpopularity by ostentatiously absenting themselves from the funeral services for King Humbert. There are anti-clericals at the other extreme, who call for fresh legislation against the Church, and wreck each approach of the Government towards conciliation. There is still much local bitterness between the extremists of both sides. In a Romagnuol village a "Society of the 20th of September"¹ imports a Protestant pastor to preach in opposition to the priest; at Barletta a new Catholic club is at once confronted by a Masonic lodge. But among the moderate men of both parties there is a growing desire for peace. "Two hundred thousand people in this city," said an eminent cleric of Genoa to us, "would illuminate their houses to celebrate a reconciliation between Pope and King." In Parliament ministers can talk of compromise without the old cries of disapproval. The opposition to religious teaching in the schools is dying down. The common persecution of 1898 has engendered a certain fellow-feeling between Socialists and progressive Catholics. At the Vatican every one, from the Pope downwards, feels how much the Church is suffering from the present tension. The irreconcilables were dismayed by the issue of the Cuban war and the possible portent of an American war-fleet in European

¹ The anniversary of the day when the Italians entered Rome in 1870, and now a national holiday.

waters. Religious bodies have large sums invested in the Italian funds and house property at Rome, and are therefore concerned in the stability of the State. Ardent Catholics like Count Paganuzzi, the President of the Catholic Congress, talk of "our common country," and ostentatiously profess their zeal for Unity. The Christian Democrats "ask that the present antagonism between the institutions of the country and the Church and Pope may cease." Communal Councils are schools of patriotism, and the Catholic councillors at Milan attend the unveiling of a monument to Victor Emmanuel. Catholics and Moderates, occasionally Catholics and Democrats, work harmoniously together on local bodies. Here and there a broad-minded man like Padre Semeria preaches the union of men of all creeds in social work. And already there is a good deal of mutual understanding between the Government and the Vatican. The Italian and Vatican police work harmoniously together at the Papal celebrations in St. Peter's. It was arranged through the now Queen-Dowager that the Court should have a quiet season during the Holy Year. The Government reinstates chaplaincies in the fleet. The Sacred Penitentiary allows Communal Councils to accept from the State grants of expropriated Church property, and in exchange to cancel from their budgets grants to the church or priest. Emigration is a neutral ground, on which the civil authorities and the priests work together. The Vatican, at the request of the Government, withdraws the French missionaries from Erythræa, and sends Italians in their place. The pre-

fect at Udine officially organizes the Catholic pilgrimages to Rome. There is thus an increasing good feeling growing up, and, at all events in practical and non-essential matters, the fight is largely with blank cartridge. But that either side will formally renounce its hostility seems impossible. Crispi probably tried his best in 1887 and failed. The Papacy never explicitly abandons a position or owns itself in the wrong. Italy perhaps might gain temporarily, if she made her peace with the Pope by the cession of a little piece of Rome, and with good-will on both sides its minor inconveniences might be avoided. But she cannot abate her dignity by surrender, and she knows that her strength is to sit still, till the Temporal Power has lost its interest for all the world and passes into the limbo of the forgotten and impossible.

It is, however, not improbable that the next Pope will remove the *non expedit*. Leo himself is pledged to it and cannot abandon it; but Don Boldori's arguments seem to have impressed even him. "As long as I live," he is reported to have told the obstinate priest, "the *non expedit* will be maintained; my successor will see what is best to do afterwards." It has been rumoured since, that orders have been sent from Rome that all Catholics are to claim their votes. If this be so, it must mean that a change of policy after the present pontificate has already been decided on. The Vatican is too sagacious to persist in a plan of secondary importance, which it is powerless to enforce. The "Christian Democrats" want to see a democratic Catholic party in Parliament; the conservative

Catholics already, as a whole, vote with the Moderates. And with the removal of the *non expedit* will disappear the last barrier to a definite alliance of the great body of Catholics and Conservatives. It is true that hitherto the Catholics have repudiated any formal alliance, and their democratic wing strenuously opposes it, but the desire for union is patent on both sides, however much fusion may be deferred by such incidents as the friction at King Humbert's funeral. The two parties are already allied for municipal affairs in many places. At the late election the Pelloux Government bid openly for Catholic support. The social ties between the two sides are very strong, and a common dread of Socialism draws them together. Catholics realize very acutely that the struggle of the future is between themselves and the Socialists. It is true that there has been a slight approximation between Socialists and Christian Democrats. They suffered together in 1898; Christian Democrats persecuted by the bishops and Socialists harried by the Government make common cause; some, at all events, of the Christian Democrats warmly backed the Extreme Left in their obstructionist tactics last year, and rejoiced in their electoral successes. But they recognize as clearly as do the other Catholic sections that Socialism is the enemy. "We must be beforehand with the Socialists, or we shall be annihilated," said a speaker at the Catholic Congress of Ferrara. "We have beaten Liberalism, we shall beat Socialism, the generous enemy that is now advancing to fight us," said Don Albertario, the semi-republican priest of Milan, whom the Government

imprisoned in 1898. Men who want to secure religious education, to win State recognition for the religious rite of marriage, to give the priests a partial control of the charities, to raise the position of the poorer clergy; others, who think more of forming "a wise and great party of the men of order, a phalanx of true Conservatives," which will defend property from Socialist attacks; a great mass of Catholics of all classes, who long for some visible sign of reconciliation between Church and Government—all these would welcome the alliance of Catholics and Conservatives.

B. THE SOCIAL WORK OF THE CATHOLICS

Of late years there has been a very considerable advance in the social activity of the Church. It is true that the great mass of the clergy, at all events in the South, are still untouched by the new spirit. Their sympathies are with the middle and upper classes. Indifferentism is an impalpable enemy, and they have no sectarian spur as in a Protestant country. The inferior teaching, the benumbing atmosphere of most of the seminaries, is a bad training for a progressive clergy. "The style of teaching," says a Catholic writer, "the ordinary conversation, the means adopted to train the minds of our priests, are all charged with the heavy, enervating superficiality, which is so apparent in Italian clerical life." In the Centre and South the average priest is pious, kind, hardworking, often the friend and comforter of his flock, but he is ignorant and superstitious, and dreads any novelty in science or politics; just where the

Church seems strongest in pomp and popularity, the new spirit is felt least. The bishops, as a rule, are too puzzled to give guidance in social questions, and sometimes harass any priest who is democratic in his sympathies. But hostile or indifferent as the majority of the clergy are to social reform, a considerable number of the younger priests, especially in the towns of the North, have a high conception of their work. They visit the poor, hunt up parents who do not send their children to school and catechism, busy themselves with various kinds of social activity. A few here and there in the villages are the apostles of agricultural improvement. It is part of the great wave of "Catholic Socialism," which has rolled in from Germany and France. "Socialism" is a misnomer, for there is little that is socialistic in its policy. It is in the main (apart from the more advanced section in Germany) an attempt to moralize the rights of property, together with a curious, half-true, half-false criticism of modern liberalism and modern economics. Its prophet is Thomas Aquinas; it holds with him that there is no absolute right of possession, no *jus utendi abutendique*,¹ and that those who have must give their superfluity to those who need. They see how the destruction of the old guilds and the rise of great industries tends to leave the worker an isolated unit, powerless to hold his own against the capitalist. Their demands of the State are generally mild—factory legislation for women and children, compulsory Sunday

¹ The Italian law, being based on the Roman, is more than usually tender to the rights of property. See Signor Salvioli's admirable study, *I difetti sociali del codice civile* (Palermo, 1891).

rest, land law reform ; some of them add a minimum wage. Their economic panacea is a system of "corporations," which sometimes means not much more than Catholic trade-unions of workmen and Catholic associations of employers, with a common machinery for the settlement of disputes, but more often takes the fantastic form of a compulsory grouping into a close organization of all employers and workers in a trade, always with the ulterior aim of a Catholic propagandism, and sometimes with the strange political conception of parliaments representative not of localities but of trades and professions. In politics the Catholic Socialists are reactionaries, looking back to medieval precedents, as a rule bitterly hostile to Liberalism, often the ally, perhaps the tool, of aristocratic Conservatism. But ideas, when they cross the Alps, have a way of losing their patrician colour, and in Italy the movement has no sinister relations with great landlords. It keeps its humanitarian zeal, its sectarian ends, its fantastic economics, its practical good works. It had its precursors in the eighties in Curci and Liberatore the Jesuit, but before the appearance of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* it had only touched a few isolated thinkers. Since then it has become a big fact in Italian life and thought. It runs in two channels. Its more Conservative wing is represented by the Catholic Congresses. The Congresses practically began in 1875, but it is only since 1891 that they have met regularly or set their hand seriously to social work. Their social programme, as drafted at the Congress of Rome in 1894, aims at the build-

ing up of the "Christian Catholic social order." It wishes to protect and develop the property of charities and religious corporations as "a reserve treasure for the people"; to protect national and municipal estates, which are to be used for the public good or leased to the poor; to encourage and protect small properties; to promote tenancy reform by long leases and compensation for improvements; to encourage profit-sharing; to make usury illegal and regulate the operations of the Stock Exchange; above all, to promote "corporations" both of employers and workmen if possible, of workmen alone if the employers stand aloof. Their municipal programme includes a wages clause in public contracts, a fair wage for employees, fair rents for tenants on municipal or charitable estates, a reduction of local duties on articles of necessity, and a vigorous administration of sanitary and factory laws. But its most important work is independent of State action. It has done little in the towns, but in parts of North Italy it is carrying on a very valuable work among the peasants. It has almost monopolized the Village Bank movement, and in 1899 could count 800 affiliated banks.¹ It has started "Catholic Agricultural Unions" to supply implements and seed and manures to members at wholesale prices. It has at least three "Rural Unions" "to defend the interests of all agricultural classes," a large number of small friendly societies, a few cooperative stores and cooperative dairies, a Hail Insurance Society, besides some thirty People's Banks

¹ See below, p. 183.

in towns to make credit easy to the small tradesman and artisan, and a central bank at Parma. In the diocese of Bergamo it has carried cooperation among the peasants to a high state of development.¹

All through the work of the Congresses the vein of Catholic propagandism runs strong. Sincerely patriotic as is their tone, their submissiveness to the Pope is still more marked. "Help in this work of redemption," says Don Luigi Cerutti, the apostle of Village Banks, "and from the Bank you will bring the workman to the Church." The rules of their Catholic working-men's banks make practising Catholicism a condition of membership. The members of their *Casse rurali* are bound not to act in opposition to the Church, and in practice are exclusively Catholic. They defend this policy on the plea that Catholicism is a guarantee of honesty, that in a small village the bond of a common faith is necessary to give mutual confidence. But the Catholics themselves are not agreed as to the wisdom of the sectarian test, and its franker advocates confess that its main object is to discipline the Catholic forces in town and country for political ends. It is doubtful, however, whether, outside certain districts of Lombardy and Venetia, the Congresses represent any very strong or active force. They claim 4000 Parish Committees and 8000 affiliated societies of different kinds, a membership of 15,000 in the diocese of Milan, and considerable numbers in Lombardy, Venetia, Emilia, and parts of Tuscany. But many of the Parish Committees exist only on paper,

¹ See below, p. 189.

and they have little footing in Piedmont or in the Centre and South.

Their work has been severely criticized by the "Christian Democrats" for its lack of initiative, its indifference to its own municipal programme, its subservience to the priests, its tendency to be wire-pulled by a few individuals.¹ The "Christian Democrats" disclaim any hostility to the Congresses, but they represent a far more advanced line of social thought, which approximates more nearly to the Catholic Socialism of Germany.² The movement owes itself to a small band of younger men, foremost among whom are Don R. Murri of Rome and Signor Meda of Milan, zealous Catholics with an almost strained profession of devotion to the Pope, but finding in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and in the work of the German Catholic Socialists the inspiration for a thoroughgoing social programme. Catholics, they urge, must sever themselves from all association with Conservatism and capitalism, and fight the Socialists with a policy that meets the real needs of modern industrial life. They support the *non expedit* in a hope that Catholics will hold back from political life till they have learned to be Democrats, but they plead earnestly that there may be no hostility to popular institutions or Italian Unity. Far outstripping the political programme of the Congresses, they ask for a minimum wage and a maximum day's work, for a large reduction in the army budget, and wide financial reforms in the inte-

¹ The Congress at Rome last year seems to have been more democratic in tone than the earlier Congresses.

rest of the poor. The strength of the Christian Democrats lies among the younger priests of the North, especially in Piedmont. The Diocesan Committee of Milan, though affiliated to the Congresses, appears to be mainly under their influence; and despite the opposition of the majority of the bishops, who have sometimes even prohibited their Committees, they have no doubt a certain strength. They are doing a very noble piece of work in training the clergy to a high conception of social duty, and they are leavening Italian Catholicism with a spirit that in many respects is genuinely democratic. But, much as all men of good-will must admire their work, it may be doubted whether, as a party, they have a future. It seems well-nigh impossible that they can contest with Socialism the leadership of the working classes; however democratic their views, they cannot content them with mere programmes, or compete with men who are fighting the battle of the proletariat in Parliament. It is still less likely that they will, especially since the last encyclical, win the mass of the Catholics to their side. They will do not a little to leaven Italian life with a high ideal, and theirs will be the highest meed that can come to any religious party, that it has forwarded the general deed of man and died in doing it.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIALISTS

History of Italian Socialism. The Marxite School. Attitude towards (1) the peasants and cooperation; (2) other Democratic parties. The "minimum programme." Socialist strength in (1) the middle classes; (2) the artisans and peasants. The Republicans. The Radicals. The Extreme Left.

THE very rapid growth of Socialism, its appearance as a Parliamentary party, its absorption of much of what is best in national life and thought, is the master-fact of Italian politics to-day. A movement, that barely existed ten years ago, is now their most living force; and its enthusiasm, its ability, its capacity of adaptation, are proofs of the political genius that is potent still in Italy.

Socialism made a late appearance there. The absorbing interest of the national movement, Mazzini's influence, above all the absence of great industries, made Italy before 1870 an unkind soil for any growth of Socialism. In the sixties such little extreme thought as there was, was anarchist. Bakounine gave considerable attention to Italy, and in 1870 the Anarchists had won a certain amount of ground, at all events in Romagna. But already in the seventies their clubs were wavering towards Socialism. The extension of the franchise in 1882 converted many, like Andrea Costa, to the milder creed; and down to 1885 it is probable

that Socialism was gradually gaining on Anarchism, though neither made much headway. Meanwhile, the environment was changing fast in Northern Italy. Capitalist industry was spreading; the Nationalist movement had long since done its work; the old Radical and Republican parties, though still strong, had little programme to attract the industrial masses, who were beginning to feel their strength in the towns of Piedmont and Lombardy. About 1885 a "working-men's party" was formed at Milan, and soon counted 40,000 members. It was a mixture of Anarchist and Socialist elements, that admitted only working men, and attacked the Radicals more bitterly than any other party; and the common hostility of the progressive middle classes and the Government soon wrecked it. The ground was clear for a purely Socialist party, and in 1891 the publication of the *Critica Sociale* by Signor Turati, a wealthy Milanese barrister, and Dr. Anna Kuliscioff, a Russian exile, marks the rise of the Collectivists in Italy. They were convinced Marxites, and took *Das Kapital* for their Bible. According to the doctrine they had sworn to, irresistible economic forces make for the gradual absorption of industry into ever fewer hands, till every trade becomes a gigantic monopoly. With this the middle classes disappear, and society is parted into a few men of immense wealth on the one hand, on the other a great proletariat, economically at the mercy of the monopolists. But this proletariat in all Western countries has the vote, and as all classes, except the very rich, sink to a common level of

economic subjection, they organize themselves politically for a "struggle of classes," which must end in the victory of the proletariat and the expropriation by the State, in the interest of the masses, of the whole wealth and industrial organization of the country. Marx' doctrine has about as much truth as other economic theories, but it has radically changed the whole moral atmosphere of Socialism. It is no longer revolutionary; processes, that *ex hypothesi* owe themselves to an inevitable evolution, have no need of plot or insurrection to assist them; a theory, that confounds middle class and working men in a common lot, destroys the old antagonism between them; and the man who believes that the forces of nature are fighting irresistibly on his side gets the same kind of strength that the Puritan had when he prayed to the God of Battles. If the greatness of a book is measured by its influence, *Das Kapital* is in the sphere of social politics the greatest book of the past half-century.

The *Critica Sociale*, a little fortnightly review, written with much skill and knowledge of economic facts, at once made a school. Its first result was to draw in a number of brilliant young men of university education—lawyers and doctors for the most part,—who threw themselves into the propaganda with the enthusiasm that Socialism evokes in every country on the Continent. Socialist clubs were founded, and in the same year of 1891, 150 working-men's societies were represented at the first Socialist Congress. Next year came the final rupture with the Anarchists, and

henceforward Socialism has been free from their dangerous association. The Socialists had now become a serious party, claiming nearly a quarter of a million well-organized adherents, with a new element of culture superadded, and all the strength of the Marxite doctrine behind it. But it was rigid and exclusive, with no desire to compromise with any party or abate one tittle of its gospel. It would have no dealings with Radicals or Republicans, and from 1891 to 1893 it was welcomed by the Conservatives as a valuable ally against their old opponents. In the province of Forlì so bitter was the feud between Socialists and Republicans, that, true to the savage traditions of the Romagnuol sects, each side assassinated men of the rival party. It was in vain that the more moderate leaders, as Ferri and Costa, urged at the Congress of 1893 a working alliance with the Republicans; Turati and the Milanese carried the Congress with them in a policy of isolation. The same exclusiveness marked their attitude to the peasants. The Marxite doctrine, shutting its eyes to inconvenient facts, preached the rapid disappearance of the small farmer and peasant proprietor, and the purists of the creed, as in Germany, deprecated any attempt to postpone their doom by promoting agrarian legislation or helping Village Banks. They would have left the peasants alone, or confined their rural propaganda to the agricultural labourers in the large-farm districts. But the heartlessness of a creed, that would sacrifice a great class to give Marx' theories a chance of coming true, was too callous for the more generous of them. The wiser section saw

that the Socialists could never be a majority in Italy unless they won the peasants; they pointed out that here and there the small proprietors and farmers had already been attached to the party by a more sympathetic programme; that the Village Bank, at all events, taught the value of union, just as the cooperative and friendly societies were often nurseries of Socialism; that the Socialists had been most successful where, as in Emilia and the Mantovano, they had promoted cooperation and developed the ideal and sentimental side of the movement.

It was slowly that their arguments convinced the majority of the party. It was the practical evidence of the value of cooperation, the personal pressure of Socialist peasant-proprietors, especially in Piedmont, that made the earlier policy of hostility or indifference an impossible one. Already in 1893 the Socialists of some districts were actively promoting cooperation. In 1896 the Socialist Congress decided to assist all forms of cooperation other than Village Banks, and take up the cause of the *mezzaiuolo* and small tenant; but it still prophesied the speedy decay of peasant-proprietorship, and deprecated any legislation which aimed at arresting the decay. Next year even this remnant of the old gospel went overboard. It was discovered that Karl Marx' agrarian theories applied to England only, that small properties showed small tendency to disappear, and that there was room for small farms even in a Socialist society. It was decided to organize a vigorous propaganda among all classes of peasants. The ban was taken off even

2 the Village Banks, and the cold approval of co-operation changed to a strong appeal to forward its advance.

About the same time the exclusiveness, that refused the alliance of other Democratic parties, began to break down. Crispi's savage repression in 1894 drew his victims together in common opposition to a policy, that struck at Republicans and Radicals as much as at Socialists. Here and there, especially at Milan and Cremona, the Socialists refused to wait for the permission of their party, and openly allied themselves with the Radicals at the local elections. In 1895 the Congress, with apparently a good deal of hesitation, decided that Socialists might vote for non-Socialist candidates at the second ballots. Two years later it found its hand forced by the action of the Lombards, and sanctioned a working alliance with other Democratic parties in special cases. Still, however, the movement towards compromise was a faltering one, and there was a strong minority in the party that disliked even the small concessions that had been made. On the whole, the period from 1891 to 1897 is one of adhesion to the whole Marxite creed, of a dislike to unite with other popular parties, and of a policy of suspicion towards the peasants and cooperation.

It needed the stimulus of persecution to change the Socialists into a practical political party. The early days, when the Government smiled on them, soon drew to a close. At the end of 1893 came the troubles in Sicily, and the blame of them was very unjustly set to their account. As long as Crispi remained in power,

they were harassed and persecuted, but alike under his dragooning and Di Rudini's milder repression,¹ they made steady growth. In 1895 they polled 60,000 votes and returned 12 Deputies; in 1897 they polled 108,000 votes and returned 16 Deputies.² Next year came the Milan disturbances,³ and with them and the violent reaction that followed, the character of Italian Socialism has radically changed. The tendencies that had already been at work before 1898 rapidly matured. Radical and Republican and Socialist leaders met in prison, and the "union of popular parties" became a project soon to be realized. The exclusiveness, the economic purism, the dislike of compromise begin to disappear; Karl Marx is relegated to the background; the Socialists become the advanced wing of a great Parliamentary party, and stand out as the champions of constitutional right and of a very practical political and social programme. The famous "minimum programme," though it dates from about 1895, comes into prominence now and marks the advent of a Parliamentary policy. It was revised and improved last year, and it would be difficult to formulate a better groundwork for the political and social legislation that Italy needs so urgently. It is a programme, says Professor Villari even of the earlier edition, that every sensible man could endorse almost in its entirety. Its political

¹ See below, p. 88.

² Owing to the difficulty of classifying a certain number of members, figures vary considerably in different estimates. We have taken for 1897 and 1900 those given by Signor Torresin in the *Riforma Sociale* for August 15, 1900.

³ See below, p. 92.

demands are universal suffrage for adults of both sexes, payment of Deputies and members of local councils, liberty of press and speech, of meeting and combination, the neutrality of Government in disputes between capital and labour, religious equality, a national militia in place of a standing army, a humaner Penal Code. The economic programme includes improved factory legislation for women and children, the prohibition of night work except in cases of public necessity, a normal thirty-six hours' rest once a week, reform of the laws on Accidents' Insurance and Old Age Pensions,¹ compulsory insurance against sickness, the encouragement of arbitration in labour disputes, admission of cooperative societies² to contract on equal terms for public works, the reform of laws between landlord and tenant, a Ministry of labour, the nationalization of railways and mines, which are to be worked by cooperative associations or by the State. The eight-hours' day and minimum wage, which appeared in earlier editions of the programme, have disappeared. The educational proposals would make compulsory education a reality, and would not only extend the compulsory age to the fifth standard (instead of the third as at present), but would include a further compulsory attendance for four years at evening or holiday schools. Poor school-children are to be fed and clothed. The universities are to be freed from State control, and "University Extension" lectures on the English model are to be promoted, apparently by the State. Financial reforms are to include the abolition of State duties on food, the

¹ See below, p. 218.

² See below, p. 209.

repeal of all local customs-duties, a progressive income-tax and succession duty, the taxation of unearned increment, economies on the military and Civil Service budgets, and a reduction of interest on the national debt. The earlier editions of the programme contained an elaborate municipal policy—the municipalization of public services, an eight-hours' day and minimum wage for municipal employees, progressive rating, the prohibition of expenditure on theatres, fireworks, &c. (*spese di lusso*),¹ the letting of municipal contracts to associations of labourers, the subsidizing of Chambers of Labour, the provision of food and clothes and a system of scholarships for poor children. But in the edition of last year most of these details are replaced by a general assertion in favour of municipal freedom and decentralization.

Everything seems to favour the spread of Socialism in Italy: the pessimism that sees nothing that is good in the existing order; the optimism that during the last year or two looks to a happier time dawning for the country; the anarchy of the old Parliamentary parties; the happy accident which has enabled the Socialists to become the champions of constitutional right; its own high faith and enthusiasm; the fine qualities of its leaders; the discipline and power of self-effacement, which allows the frankest divergence of opinion, but loyally subordinates all personal differences to unity; the organization and propagandism, which, fitful though they sometimes are and weak as compared with those of German or Austrian Socialism, are far superior to those of any other Italian party. It

¹ See below, p. 267.

has monopolized many practical reforms, which, but for their blindness, the Conservatives and Liberals would have taken for their own. Alone among Italian parties it stands boldly for purity of public life, and while well-meaning men of Right and Left have touched corruption with a trembling hand, the Socialists have smitten and spared not. To the best and most thoughtful of the educated middle classes it appeals through its high idealism, its call to intellect, its protest against the barrenness of public life, its splendid campaign against evil in high places. "The *Critica Sociale*," says a Milanese journalist, "has given almost all of us the social conscience." It is remarkable how many of the leaders of Italian thought are avowed Socialists—Lombroso, the criminologist whose fame is European; De Amicis, the most popular of Italian novelists; Ferrero, the best read of Italian social writers; the poets Graf, Guerrini, and Giovanni Pascoli, the latter the best of the younger poets.¹ Others—Sanarelli, the discoverer of the yellow-fever germ; Chiaruggi, the leading embryologist of Italy; Battelli, one of its best-known physicists; Fradeletto, the organizer of the Art Exhibitions at Venice; Pantaleoni, the economist; lawyers of high repute, as Majno and Zerboglio, though not all Socialists, are Deputies of the Extreme Left. Gabriele D'Annunzio, till of late an ultra-Conservative, stood at the last election as one of its candidates. Smaller men of the educated middle class are drawn to Socialism, partly because they are poor themselves and sympathise with the poor, partly

¹ See below, p. 344.

because discontent finds a natural home among the educated unemployed, the multitude of young university men without work—doctors, lawyers, civil engineers, would-be civil servants. In the Civil Service itself the Socialists have many adherents, who pass them on secret circulars, or, if sent by the Government at election time to work for a Ministerialist candidate, take care to help his Socialist rival. The managers and organizers of the rising industries of the North are often Socialist in sympathy. An analysis of the professions of the thirty-three Socialist Deputies shows that among them ten are lawyers, seven are professors and teachers, three are journalists, three are men of business, and only three are small tradesmen or working-men.

It is hardly necessary to say that Socialism is very strong among the artisans and railwaymen, especially in the industrial centres of the North. It is here that it has won most of its Parliamentary victories. At the Milanese Socialist Club one sees the bright, eager, intelligent artisans, who with the young professional men are the backbone of the party. They are not driven to it by poverty; Biella, where perhaps wages are higher than anywhere else in Italy, is very Socialist. But they are keen politicians, eager for a better future for their class, sickened by the folly and corruption and misgovernment of the ruling classes. Even in the South, here and there, they are becoming Socialist. Among the *mezzaiuoli* tenant-farmers Socialism is hardly existent, but it has made a certain amount of headway with the peasant proprietors, especially

in parts of Piedmont. It is strong in many of the Romagnuol villages and sometimes in those of Emilia. In 1895 and 1897, and no doubt last year too, a good many small proprietors voted for the Socialist candidates. Their sons come back from military service, often with minds unprejudiced against novelties ; and men, who are smarting under bad government, naturally gravitate to the party that is making the best fight against it. Among the agricultural labourers the Socialists have a considerable footing, chiefly in the Po valley, but even as far south as Tuscany ; and they practically control some of the rural cooperative and friendly societies. It is probable that the army is slightly affected ; at all events, the secret circulars published by the Socialist paper, the *Avanti*, show that the authorities are seriously afraid of a Socialist propaganda there. The bulk of Socialism is, of course, in the North. An analysis of the recent elections shows that Piedmont returned six Socialist Deputies, Lombardy seven, Venetia two, Liguria one, Emilia and Romagna eleven, Tuscany two, while only two came from the whole Southern mainland, and two from Sicily. It must be remembered, however, that the Socialists had a good many unsuccessful candidates who polled heavily, and that a large number of them voted for Radical and Republican candidates ; in Piedmont and Tuscany, at all events, their strength is greater than would appear from these figures. On a low estimate their total poll was 164,000,¹ or more than one in eight of the whole number of votes recorded.

¹ See note 2, on p. 67.

It goes without saying that these figures do not all represent convinced Socialists. Many who vote for a Socialist candidate would not necessarily subscribe to Marxite doctrines, even if they understood them, perhaps care little even for the minimum programme. There are a good many lawyers and civil engineers and men of business who join the Socialists, because they like to stand well with the rising party, or hope to represent Socialist seats in Parliament, or secure posts under Socialist municipal councils. At Imola the Socialists have been the catspaw of a local bourgeois clique; at Gonzaga the leaders have used their power to place themselves in coveted local offices. The university Socialist, says Professor Villari, does not try to study the condition of the poor, but is content to abuse the bourgeoisie and invoke the struggle of classes. "If things do not improve," said a discontented civil servant, "we want a war, or the plague, or Socialism." The less educated working-man often votes for the Socialist, because Socialism has given him a vague idea that somebody has robbed him, or because he is smarting from some act of petty tyranny. At Bari a year or two ago the cab-drivers struck against a heavy municipal license, and were arrested and tried for it; in revenge they joined the Socialists in a body. Many in all classes are simply attracted by the higher character and intellect of the Socialist candidates, or vote for them from some of the extraneous reasons which affect elections in every country.

On the other hand, Socialist influence reaches

widely beyond its own ranks. Many Radicals and Republicans are Socialists at heart, or at least believe in the minimum programme, though they will not label themselves as such. The Republicans are a decaying party. Very weak between 1870 and 1890, they gained ground in the struggle against Crispi, but the rise of Socialism has eclipsed them, and it is their obvious destiny to rotate round the larger body. They are fairly strong in the Chamber; they number twenty-nine Deputies, and polled 79,000 votes at the late elections, gaining ground in the North, but losing in the South. But it is probable that they owed their success largely to Socialist support, and though they are still strong in Romagna and the Marches and Apulia, and more or less at Milan and Rome, they do not count as a real force in the country. They are *quattro noci in un sacco* (four nuts rattling in a bag), a party much in evidence, but with strength disproportionate to its seeming. Their policy does not touch the radical evils of the time. The question of monarchy or republic has gone into the background. Some of them retain Mazzini's hostility to Socialism without his zeal for social reform. Their social ideal is a nation of small proprietors; their programme—a vague and weak one as compared with the Socialist—stops short at compulsory education, a progressive income-tax, heavy succession duties, and the expropriation of uncultivated lands. They are divided among themselves. One section is Unitarian, another Federalist; some are anti-Clericals, while at Lodi Republicans and Clericalists work in alliance. A few

are Irredentists,¹ and therefore favour a strong army. They have come out wiser from the late constitutional struggle; there is more harmony among the different sections. Though there is still a group which, faithful to the Mazzinian tradition, would have no part in a monarchical Parliament, the majority have learnt that the fight for liberty must be made in the polling-booths and not in the streets. They have a value in their insistence on the moral aspect of politics, in their protest that the rights of man and sense of citizenship have their worth as well as material prosperity. But they have no future as an independent party. As the moderate wing of Socialism, they will help to swell the great movement on which their country's destinies depend.

The monarchical Radicals have a bigger future. They are considerably stronger than the Republicans, and have a large following in Lombardy, Venetia, Emilia, and Tuscany. They polled 89,000 votes last year, and have thirty-four representatives in the Chamber. The *Secolo*, the most powerful of Italian papers, is an able and high-toned exponent of their views. The Radicals represent a large number of men, especially among the lower-middle class and artisans, who are Monarchists, who do not care to swallow the Socialist formulas, but smart as much as Socialists or Republicans under the discredit and misgovernment of the old political parties, and are as eager as they to see a large extension of political rights and a more or less thorough social programme. They draw too, though perhaps in a less degree than the Socialists,

¹ See below, p. 296.

from the cultured middle classes, and count among their Deputies a very capable leader in Signor Sacchi and men of such high economic talent as Signors Pantaleoni and Guerici.

It is not easy to speculate as to their future. If they lose their faith in the monarchy, or if, on the other hand, the Socialists frankly accept the monarchy, their present alliance with the extreme party is likely to continue, and they may possibly become more or less absorbed into it. But there are strong tendencies among them, which make for an alliance with the Constitutional Left; and a coalition Government of Radicals and Constitutional Left is a not improbable contingency in the future.¹ As a link between the old Liberals and the popular parties, the Radicals are doing a work of great usefulness. But their position is one of extreme delicacy, and it will require much tact in their leaders to content their friends on either side.

From the union of Socialists, Republicans, and Radicals springs the Parliamentary party of the Extreme Left. Each section retains its autonomy, and they do not always act together. For instance, the Republicans joined in the Parliamentary homage to the late king's memory, while the Socialists, though with all courtesy, abstained. It is rather more than a coalition, and rather less than a party; the more reactionary the Government, the closer will be its union; under a Liberal Government it is hardly likely to hold together, though, in any case, the mutual respect and confidence that the different

¹ See below, note on p. 109.

sections have gained, are likely to prevent any serious friction and will make them often work together. The party is now flushed with its recent triumphs, its dramatic resistance to the Pelloux Government, its successes at last year's elections, which have raised its Parliamentary strength from sixty to ninety-eight and put every Ministry at its mercy. They have well earned their success. They have changed the whole Parliamentary atmosphere, bringing with them a new breath of seriousness and high purpose and determination. "They have forced Parliament and the country," confesses a Deputy of the old Left, "to attend to principles and forget personalities." Through all the trickery and intrigue of Italian Parliamentary life they have taken a straight, strong line, and in the crisis of 1900 the little band of sixty made reaction impossible. Their obstructionist tactics of last year sound ill in English ears; but it is difficult to condemn their action, when the fight was for bare liberty, and, at all events, it was adopted from a profound conviction that only by it could Parliament and the country save constitution and freedom. Once or twice in the tension of the struggle and after intolerable provocation the Extreme Left lost its head. But where moderation has been possible, it has shown a rare moderation. There has been little or no fighting and noise for noise and fighting's sake. We should like, said Signor Turati in the Chamber, "to respect the Conservatives and fight them with courteous and peaceful methods." This will probably be more possible now. The passion on both sides and the traditional

want of decorum in the Chamber may still lead sometimes to regrettable incidents. But the crisis of the spring of 1900 is not likely to recur. The Extreme Left is entering on a new Parliamentary phase, and one that will test its statesmanship. The Socialists have yet got to sift their men, and perhaps winnow out a good many, who confound oratory and common-sense. The party can no longer be content with a negative policy. It is sufficiently strong to influence legislation, and it must be prepared with a programme. Will it produce one that will be at once strong and reasonable? So far the omens are good. The party has practically lost any revolutionary colour. Here and there there linger a few Federalist hankerings, but they are little more than pious opinions, that at the most may promote a modest decentralization. Unless the Crown throws in its lot with the ultra-Conservatives, there will be no Republican agitation, for even those who are Republicans in theory feel that that would be mere waste of political energy, when there are a hundred social questions crying for solution. They have given the new king a dignified but genuine welcome, and there are Socialists and Radicals who have been overtly appealing to the Crown against the Parliamentary majority. If a Democratic Ministry comes into power, they will necessarily be supporters of the Government, and become *ipso facto* Constitutionalists.¹ And in their social and political policy of the moment the Extreme Left are moderate even to excess. In spite of themselves, owns the *Critica*

¹ See below, note on p. 109.

Sociale, the Socialists are obliged to think at present more of political than of social remedies, and, it adds, the three great questions of military expenditure, the railway question, the modified Free Trade programme that finds its expression in treaties of commerce, are likely to absorb the time of the Chamber for several years to come. The abolition of the corn duty, the consolidation of political liberty, the reform of the magistrature, is the programme of Signor Ferrero, the Socialist writer. The abolition of the corn duty, the reduction of the price of salt, safeguards for personal liberty against police abuses, is the almost identical programme of Signor Pantaleoni, the Radical Deputy. The Socialists are willing, up to a point, to accept legislation in the direction of "State Socialism," but they are suspicious of carrying it too far; they feel that for a long time yet it would be a hazardous experiment to put more power into the hands of an anti-Liberal and incompetent bureaucracy, and they are more concerned to secure free play for trade-unionism and cooperation. And so, whatever its ultimate destiny may be, the policy of the Extreme Left will be for the present one of thorough-going Liberalism. Its dangers now are not that it may be extreme and doctrinaire. They lie a little in the possibility of friction between the different sections, but more in the temptation to be respectable and commonplace. The party has to meet the dangers of success—the adhesion of time-servers and men with their own game to play, the impalpable seductiveness of social influences, the risk that it may barter its single-minded democratic strength for peace

and compromise. Some kind of understanding with the Constitutional Left may be inevitable and desirable, but it implies the possibility of contagion from the bad traditions of Italian politics. These are serious dangers, but the Extreme Left, and especially its Socialist wing, has much on its side—the high character and ability of its leaders, its own honesty and discipline, the eager democratic forces behind it, the new spirit of a time when apathy and corruption seem lifting and a new patriotism dawning on the nation. If this party, on which so many hopes are resting, preserves its sincerity and cleanhandedness, it may lift the country to a new level; if it sinks, as Right and Left have sunk before it, the last state of Italy will be worse than the first.

NOTE

The Italian Anarchists have come into prominence again by the murder of the late king, but, however dangerous they may be as individuals, as a political party they count for very little. There is a certain quantity of purely theoretic anarchism among the studious young university men, just as there is in Russia; but with them it is more a phase of speculative thought than any principle of political action. There is the anarchism of the bomb and dagger, which has a very limited number of believers among the poor. It is remarkable that the misery of the land has not bred more, but the gentle Italian nature is repugnant to a creed whose means are cruel, and it is noteworthy that the notorious Italian political assassins have most or all been emigrants, and their anarchism has been imported from abroad. The Socialists have valiantly combated the Anarchists with rival arguments and organization, and have cut the ground away from them by offering a humaner creed to the men who were driven into violent courses by social injustice.

CHAPTER IV

THE "FATTI DI MAGGIO" AND THEIR SEQUEL

Discontent. Sicilian riots of 1893-94. Coercion under Crispi and Di Rudinì. The food riots of 1898. The *Fatti di maggio*. Coercion under Pelloux. The *Decreto-legge*. The Extreme Left obstruct. The elections of 1900. Saracco Ministry.

THE recent political history of Italy centres round the Milan riots of May 1898. Their immediate causes were local and accidental, but the circumstances that made them possible had been accumulating for years. Three or four years ago, even more than to-day, the whole Italian atmosphere was charged with discontent. The poverty was very great. It is true that it was no worse, perhaps it was rather less intense, than twenty years before. Bread, despite the progressive increase of the corn duty, was generally cheaper. Industry was beginning to revive in the North. To some extent the South was recovering from the crisis that followed the rupture of the French Commercial Treaty in 1887. But if the poverty was actually no greater, it was felt more. Wants had risen faster than the means of satisfying them. The march of civilization, the spread of railways, the extravagance that came in with the speculations of the eighties, the better food and clothes of the conscripts, the inroads of advertisement in the country districts, had all had their share in raising the standard of life. The poor

had learnt to resent their sufferings. "There is," said Professor Nitti, "a general discontent, not because things have grown worse, but because we have grown better and are less tolerant of wretchedness." And the burden was the more intolerable, because misgovernment was doing so much to add to it. All the promises of their rulers—of Depretis and Crispi and the King—that the social problem should be faced, had come to nothing. The rupture of the French treaty had ruined thousands of the poorer middle class. The corn duty made bread artificially dear. Italy seemed to have accumulated all the economic evils that bad government could bring—heavy taxes, high tariffs, a depreciated currency, adverse exchanges. And, worst of all, the people had learnt that the Government was as dishonest as it was incapable. The Bank scandals, the alliance with *Mafia* and *Camorra*,¹ the manipulation of tariffs and bounties in the interest of a few manufacturers and speculators, had destroyed all confidence in the morality of statesmen. There were many who thought with the peasants of Partinico that "the Government was a tyrant who swallowed everything, robbed at his will, and disposed of property and persons for the benefit of a few."

It was a Government that courted revolution, and but for the bottom of common-sense and moderation and long-suffering in the Italian nature, revolution would have been almost inevitable. The sequel will show that if the discontent ever went beyond a casual

¹ See below, pp. 119, 121.

riot, it was due to the mismanagement or violence of the Government. The first troubles came in Sicily. The island was suffering from a depression in all its chief productions—wine, lemons, sulphur—and though it was not quite the most miserable part of Italy, there were special circumstances that made it the most uneasy. The proud impatience of the people, the old antagonism to the mainland, an absentee landlordism forgetful of its duties, the local tyranny of cliques which abused local government for party and personal ends, kept Sicily ripe for agitation. In 1891 Socialism made its first appearance, and the Socialists organized a network of unions (*fasci*) among the downtrodden peasants. The members of the *fasci* knew or cared little about Socialism. Practically, the organization was a kind of Land-League, and was in fact a security against violence. The *fasci* were founded and controlled by men of the middle class and a few young nobles; they were religious, almost clericalist, in their tone; they opened schools and aimed at developing cooperative societies and popular libraries; in their club-rooms sometimes hung a crucifix, and by the side of Karl Marx and Mazzini were portraits of the King and Queen. In the troubled times that followed, their leaders always tried, and often managed, to keep order, and it was only a few of the worst organized *fasci* that had any hand in the disturbances.

But the richer classes, trained by generations of unpunished tyranny, saw their power threatened. No longer would the landlords grind the faces of the

peasant-farmers ; no longer would the local cliques spend the rates for their own benefit. All the conspired band of landlords and middlemen, of officials and police, took fright. They refused work to members of the *fasci* ; the police, unable to discover illegalities, invented them ; every demand for higher wages was prosecuted as "a strike with violence" ; the Sicilian Deputies had the ear of the Government, and hounded it on to flood the island with soldiers and put down the *fasci* with a strong hand. Collision inevitably resulted. Early in 1893 the peasants of Caltavuturo, thinking, probably with reason, that there was jobbery in the letting of the communal lands, went out one day in mass to dig them ; they were met by a company of soldiers, who without provocation fired on them and killed several. Giolitti promised that the soldiers should be prosecuted, but nothing was done, and feeling grew bitter through the island. Here and there the people were stung to violence. The police tried to break up the unions by legal or illegal means, and towards winter the people began to despair of peaceful remedy. In December the spirit was growing dangerous. Again and again some crowd, in protest against communal misgovernment and local taxes, hissed the Syndic or occasionally attacked the town-hall ; the soldiers fired, generally without any aggression from the crowd, the people retaliated with stones, till the street was strewn with dead and wounded men, and the people fled, to be arrested in batches and sentenced to savage penalties. Altogether in those days nearly 100 of the people and one soldier were killed.

Meanwhile Giolitti had tried at first to shut his eyes to the trouble that was threatening, then made a feeble attempt to please both sides. He left the police a free hand in their evil work, and flooded the island with soldiery, but he seems to have hoped that the officers, who all through behaved better than the civil officials, would act as peacemakers, and he put pressure on the local authorities to repeal the communal duties on corn. Naturally, he contented nobody, and the richer classes throughout the country called for Crispi, as the one man who had strength to stamp the sinister portent out. Crispi seems for a moment to have thought of conciliation and he planned drastic agrarian laws. But Crispi's head never long kept cool, and he readily believed the stories of conspiracy that the police invented. Convinced that only strong repression could save the island from revolution, he disgraced free Italy by a brutal coercion, that well-nigh rivalled the doings of Austrians or Bourbons in the old days. For seven months Sicily was under martial law. In many places people of all classes were arrested in mass; the press was gagged; co-operative stores, belonging to the poor, were dissolved and their effects seized. The procedure of the military courts was often a farce of justice; the evidence was generally such as no decent court would have listened to; and though the young officers, who were the only counsel allowed to the defendants, manfully did their best, they were browbeaten by the presiding generals. The Central Committee of the *fasci* were charged at first with conspiring to sell the island to

France or Russia. The charge was made on the report of a police-officer, who had "metaphysical certainty" of its truth, but no evidence; and though it was enough to convince Crispi, it was too flimsy even for a military court. They were sentenced, none the less, because, among other offences, they "advocated the moral and material emancipation of the labourers." By June there were over 1800 Sicilians sentenced to the horrors of the semi-penal settlements on the islands (*domicilio coatto*).

The Sicilian outbreaks were suppressed, and the landlords tore up their new agreements with their tenants. Disturbances among the marble-workers at Carrara were put down by martial law, though it was redeemed by General Heusch's endeavours to raise the position of the quarrymen. Coercion seemed successful, and Crispi expanded it into a crusade against Socialism and his own political enemies. "For two years," said Professor Sergi, "no man lived secure in his own house or in his own bed." A new temporary amendment to the Law of Public Security made any person liable to *domicilio coatto*, who excited to class hatred in a manner dangerous to the public peace. The Act was nominally aimed at the Anarchists; in practice it was used against the Republicans and Socialists. Men were tried and condemned all over Italy for exciting to hatred of classes. A barrister was sent to *domicilio coatto* for singing the "Labourers' Hymn." The Government broke up the Agricultural Labourers' Union (*lega di resistenza*) in the Cremona district. A paper was sequestered for attacking

Crispi's African policy. The coercion naturally had the reverse effect of what it was intended to do. It created a feeling of disgust and indignation, that robbed the Government of all moral strength, and left it weaker and more discredited than before.

Crispi's policy of adventure in Africa was perhaps meant to divert attention from home affairs; but, if it were so, it singularly failed. His barren Imperialism soon lost its glamour, and Adowa was the signal for his fall. The country, tired of the dishonesty and recklessness of Giolitti's and Crispi's rule, turned to Di Rudinì, as the one possible Premier who seemed to have a high standard of public morality. Even the Socialists welcomed him and his "Ministry of gentlemen"; and in the universal reaction against "megalo-mania" and corruption Di Rudinì had a noble chance to cleanse and heal. At first the new Ministry did well. Peace was made with Abyssinia; better relations were established with France; the deficits nearly disappeared; for a moment there was less coercion, and the Government at once released nearly half the victims of *domicilio coatto*. But the Premier's weakness and the old miserable Parliamentary intrigues spoilt the splendid opportunity. Prefects were still removed or promoted for electoral services; the duty on inferior cereals was increased to please the agrarian party; the Government hushed up a prison scandal, where a political offender, named Frezzi, was suspected of dying by foul play, and intensified the general distrust of law and police; the Conservatives attacked him for his "pitiful toleration" of the extreme parties,

and though he left the Republicans almost unmolested, he mildly harried the Socialists. The Minister of Justice said that he had to think of defending "the institutions" as well as of observing the law. Men were sentenced again for singing the "Labourers' Hymn," or prosecuted or worried for assisting men on strike. Socialist meetings were forbidden; Socialist Deputies were shadowed and their telegrams mutilated. Two Communal Councils were dissolved because Socialists sat on them. A month after the Premier had declared himself in favour of Chambers of Labour,¹ he allowed a Prefect to break up three. The Government prevented the reconstitution of the Cremona Labourers' Union, and broke up a tenants' defence league in Sicily. And meanwhile its promises of social legislation and military economies came to little, and Di Rudini's energies seemed absorbed in Parliamentary manoeuvring to Right or Left.

Thus at the end of 1897 the situation was more dangerous than ever. When Di Rudini, after all his promises, did little or nothing to cleanse public life, the credit of Government went lower still, and the Frezzi scandal and another case of unpunished bank fraud at Como brought a feeling of despair of honest government, of dismay that free Italy had come to this. The Socialist attack became bolder in the comparative immunity it had now; the Clericalists threw the blame on the Constitution, and Di Rudini made matters only worse by empty threats of prosecution. Towards the end of 1897 the Spanish-American war

¹ See below, p. 213.

suddenly drove up the price of bread from 1½d. to 2½d. per lb., and part of the South, always a hand's-breadth from starvation, broke out in food riots. The old local feuds, the perennial disputes over the communal lands, burst into flame again, perhaps sometimes fanned by Socialist missionaries. In January 1898 there were riots all through the South, especially in the Marches, Apulia, and Sicily, and they continued up to April. There were no politics in the movement. Neither Socialists nor Clericalists had anything more than a very indirect part in it. It was a revolt of misery, such as had broken out from time to time since 1867. The anger of the crowd was directed against the corn dealers, who were supposed to be responsible for the rise in the price of bread, or the Syndics and Communal Councils, who had imposed the municipal duty on flour or denied the poor their share of communal lands. There was no conception of legislative reform; "in the South the Commune is the State," and the Government was too far off and impersonal to attract the wrath of the uneducated peasants. Often the rioters cheered for army and king.

The riots were forcibly suppressed, generally with a good deal of forbearance on the part of the soldiers, but with some loss of life. At the end of January the Government made a feeble attempt to mitigate the dearth by reducing the corn duty temporarily by one-third (later on it was altogether suspended for two months), and in a good many places in the South the local duty was abandoned from fear. But the

riots went on, and by the end of April they had spread to the North. There was a great strike of agricultural labourers near Bologna. Near Ravenna and at Piacenza and Parma there were scuffles with the police and loss of life. But these disorders—serious enough in themselves—were forgotten in the terrible sequel at Milan. At Milan there was a good deal of distress, but none of the acute misery of the South. The city boasted with justice that it was the first town of Italy—first in industry, first in municipal progress, first in political importance—that “what Milan thinks to-day, Italy will think to-morrow.” It was growing fast, drawing to itself great numbers of Lombard and Venetian peasants, who came to find work in the factories which were springing up in all the suburbs. This rapid evolution into a great industrial city upset the social equilibrium. The new population consisted largely of rough, uneducated countrymen, drawn suddenly from village life into an atmosphere of keen political interest, and therefore naturally tending to extremes. The native workmen and middle classes were the very strength of the reaction against the militarism which had led to Adowa, against the police abuses and the corruption which had had their recent instances in the murder of Frezzi and the Como bank scandal. Their close connections with neighbouring Switzerland, the constant going and coming of migrant workmen, brought contrasts unflattering to their own country. And apart from more general causes of unrest there was an angry municipal struggle. The Moderates, sometimes with, sometimes without the

alliance of the Clericalists, had always had a majority in the Municipal Council. They had administered the city excellently well,¹ but they had made the local taxation fall heavily on the poor, and had probably used their control of the princely charities of the city to secure their own political position. For some years there had been before the Council a proposal to enlarge the city boundaries so as to include the populous and growing suburbs. The proposal was no doubt a wise one; indeed, it had been made absolutely necessary by a new law on local finance, which deprived the city of an annual income of nearly £50,000. But it implied an extension of the municipal customs to the suburbs, and though it seems to have been taken as axiomatic that the duties on articles of prime necessity should be reduced, if not abolished, there was a feeling of angry suspicion among the suburban manufacturers and workmen that the new scheme would injure them. On the top of all this political unrest and local bitterness came the agitation of Clericalists and Socialists and Republicans. None of them had any thought of revolution,² but all had attacked the Government in language that was well deserved, but was sometimes more true than prudent. The *Osservatore Cattolico* of Don Albertario had spoken slightingly of "Savoy princes" and "Savoy policy," and bitterly reproached the rich for their indifference to the sufferings of the poor. Signor De Andreis, the Radical Deputy for Milan, had spoken of "the vote and the carbine" as the two weapons of the people; Signor Turati, two years before, had

¹ See below, p. 275.

² See below, pp. 95, 96.

written of the possibility of "a provisional local Republican Government at Milan." There had nearly been a riot after the news of Adowa. At a mass meeting of Socialists in the past March the watchword had been "Spread the discontent." The celebration in the same month of the jubilee of the "Five Days of Milan" called up memories of barricades, and at one of the festivities the Royal March was hissed.

Thus there was plenty of inflammable material, but no influence making consciously for insurrection, and but for an accident and the subsequent blundering, or worse, of the authorities, the crisis would have passed off quietly. On May 5, in a scuffle with the police at Pavia, Muzio Mussi, the son of the present Syndic of Milan, was killed while trying to prevent bloodshed. The news made a deep sensation at Milan; a handbill, which was certainly inflammatory, was printed next day, and some workmen were distributing it in their dinner-hour, when the police arrested three of them. Other workmen, standing outside a neighbouring factory, tried to release the prisoners; a scuffle followed, and the police retreated with one of the arrested men to their barracks. Some troops were called up; the crowd broke the windows of the police barracks, and probably threw stones at the soldiers. The soldiers fired, and two workmen and a plain-clothes policeman were killed. A heavy storm helped to disperse the crowd, but next morning it collected in much greater strength. Some employers closed their factories; at others the workmen came out on protest. The crowds

paraded the streets, but there was no threat of violence, nor anything worse than some gibes and hisses at the soldiers, chiefly from the factory girls in the procession. Suddenly, towards noon, some cavalry charged the crowd at the gallop in the Corso Venezia, and the mischief began. The crowd seized some tramcars and made two barricades of them; here and there they broke windows, and mounted the roofs of houses to throw down tiles. But there was still nothing very serious. The defenders of the barricades stood in front of them to be photographed, and a fire-engine or two would probably have ended the whole riot. But the authorities seemed paralyzed; either they were anxious to avoid bloodshed, or they were afraid to take strong measures with the few troops they had at hand. The soldiers looked on, while barricades were thrown up and the factory girls threw vile insults at their officers. It was, in some instances at all events, not before they had been stoned, that they fired. After this the authorities lost their heads. In the words of a Milanese Moderate, till then they had been afraid, now they were afraid of having been afraid. Martial law was proclaimed; more troops were hurriedly brought up, and for three days soldiers and police carried on what was little better than a massacre. The police hunted the demonstrators through the houses, and shot them down with their revolvers. The soldiers on the roofs picked off every man who showed himself. Next day grape-shot was fired. On the 9th an artillery officer, mistaking for insurgents a crowd of beggars who had come for their usual dole

of soup to a Capucin monastery, battered down its walls.¹ In the three days ninety at least were killed and several hundreds wounded, many of them labourers going to their work, girls and old men passing down the streets, shopkeepers standing at their windows. It was a senseless, brutal butchery. The officers and soldiers, perhaps for the first and last time, disgraced the honour of the army by an inhumanity that is very rare in Italy. Both they and the authorities were maddened with fear. They magnified a street riot into a revolution, and perhaps the baser Moderates welcomed the chance of crushing the Democratic movement that was threatening their monopoly of power. The crowds made little effort to defend themselves. They had no arms, no organization. The better class of workmen kept aloof all through, and the demonstrators were mainly rougher workmen, factory girls, and boys. It is said that a handful of students from Pavia and a crowd of peasants marched on the city, and were driven back after a hot skirmish; but considerable doubt hangs on the story, and, at all events, all through the business only one soldier was killed—by a tile thrown from the roof—and twenty-three were wounded, most of them with stones. The railway was broken in several places, and a manifesto was distributed among the railwaymen urging them to strike and prevent the transport of troops. But there is no evidence that any man of standing among Socialists or Republicans or Clericalists had any part in the disturbance. It is

¹ The Government tried hard to suppress Signor Valera's *L'assalto al convento*, which gave the facts of this grotesquely iniquitous business.

certain that some of them did their best to persuade the crowds to disperse; and though the people had the suburbs at their mercy, there was no arson, except of one tramcar, and only a few thefts.

On whom lies the responsibility? In the trials that followed, the theory of the prosecution was that the Socialist and Republican, and to a minor degree the Clericalist leaders, had prepared materials for a rising at Milan; that the riots in the South were directly due to their instigation, and part of a concerted plan; and that a general strike of railwaymen was intended to prevent any transport of troops to Milan while the revolution seized the city. But the evidence in support of the charge utterly broke down, and the military court itself admitted that the riots broke out unexpectedly, that the Socialist and Republican leaders were surprised by them, and that there was no concerted plan of revolution. The charge against the Clericalists was even flimsier. The Government stated that it had proof of a seditious understanding between Clericalists and Socialists, but, as it has never produced an iota of evidence, one must be allowed to class this with other phantasms of a panic-stricken executive. The riots all through bore an obvious mark of spontaneity. But for the carelessness or provocation of the police, they would never have gone beyond the first day. The crowd had no guns and very few revolvers; the barricades were badly defended; women took a prominent part all through; there were very few red emblems. As said one of the officers told off to defend the accused, "A revolution does not break

out without arms, without a flag, without a battle-cry." Its failure was in marked contrast with the "Five Days" of 1848, when the Milanese drove 12,000 Austrians from the city. The Socialists and Clericalists, if not the Republicans, were opposed on principle to a revolution, and the worst that can be said, after giving all possible weight to the raked-up evidence of the prosecution, is that in their just indignation at the misgovernment of the country they sometimes used expressions that were unwise, that one or two dropped phrases that might be twisted into an appeal to revolution, and that the half-understood Socialist teaching made its cruder hearers think that somebody had robbed them, and filled them with an aimless desire for revenge. A graver responsibility lies on the Government and the Milanese authorities. The real causes of the disturbances of 1898 were the misery that came largely of bad government, the corruption in high places that had destroyed all trust in public men. And a special guilt lies on the Moderates of Milan. It was their blundering that allowed the movement to feel its head; it was their blind, frightened party-passion that allowed a hundred of their fellow-citizens to be slaughtered in civil bloodshed, and polluted the city with a crime that Milan will not forget or forgive for many a year to come.

At the time, however, the theory of revolution found easy credit, and through all Italy the *Fatti di maggio* scared the well-to-do classes. Had the riots been confined to the South, they would have had no more effect than the Sicilian troubles of 1894; but the disturb-

ances at Milan were a portent that dismayed them. Few understood the Socialist policy, and the Socialists loomed as revolutionaries plotting for a Red Republic. The Government yielded readily to the general cry for coercion. Martial law was proclaimed at Milan, at Florence, where had been a little disturbance, and at Naples, where there had been none. The railwaymen and all employees in the public services were put on a military footing, which made any one disobeying orders liable to two years' imprisonment. Two-thirds of the Catholic Committees and Associations—many of them with purely philanthropic objects—were dissolved. The Republican Societies were proscribed and their papers seized. Almost all the Chambers of Labour were dissolved. A number of Village Banks and Cooperative Societies were broken up and their stores seized, on the pretext that they were organized by Socialists or Revolutionary Clericals, and were helping to plan a general strike. The Government seized a fund that the railwaymen had formed to purchase shares in the Companies so as to be represented at shareholders' meetings. A trust-fund to find work for the unemployed was sequestered, because some Socialists sat on the governing body. A university professor at Bologna was suspended, because he had subscribed to a strike fund. Three schoolmasters at Turin were dismissed for expressing Socialist opinions out of school. The *Secolo*, the great Radical paper of Milan, which had strenuously preached peace during the riots, was suspended for four months. It was the reaction of

militarism let loose, of a stupid, frightened dread of labour and its claims; and it found ready followers in the men who thought the monarchy in danger but were themselves its worst enemies; in the capitalists of the North, who wanted to have the artisans at their mercy; in all the comfortable classes, who had a vague idea that any vindication of the labourers' rights would hurt themselves.

The reaction showed itself at its worst in the Military Court at Milan. When the indictment of conspiracy against the Socialist and Republican and Radical leaders broke down, various more or less irrelevant charges were substituted, and punished with savage sentences. Political criticism was treated as a crime. Signor Turati and Signor De Andreis were condemned to twelve years' imprisonment on the ground that they had stirred class hatred, and were thus indirectly responsible for the riots. Two well-known journalists, Signor Romussi, the editor of the *Secolo*, and Signor Chiesi of the *Italia del Popolo*, were sentenced to six and four years' imprisonment respectively, for "continually attacking the institutions and authorities," "exaggerating the sufferings of the people, and thus embittering the hatred of classes," and "creating the environment from which the disorders sprang." Don Albertario, the Catholic journalist, was sentenced to three years for "attacking the monarchy and institutions with subtle irony," "sowing class hatred between peasants and landlords," and "turning many of the clergy from their natural work of pacification." Madame Kuliscioff was

sentenced to two years for her Socialist and trade-union propagandism. There was hardly a pretence of decent legal procedure. The President of the Court, General Bava-Beccaris, was as indifferent to equity as he was ignorant of law. One of the young officers, who were entrusted with the defence, was punished for consulting a barrister on a doubtful point of law. Much of the evidence was worthless. The Public Prosecutor, after reading extracts from a prisoner's writings to prove his extreme opinions, argued that a person holding such views was bound to have taken part in the disturbances, and asked for his conviction on that score. A police inspector assured the Court that there was a plot, but owned that he had no information of it. When those of the accused, who escaped to Switzerland, returned and were tried before a Civil Court two years later, the judge laughed the police evidence to scorn. Nor were the illegalities confined to Milan. A priest nearly eighty years old was prosecuted and detained four months for preaching to his well-to-do congregation that they ought to consider the interests of their employees. Signorina Paola Lombroso, daughter of the foremost scientist of Italy, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for writing an article, which commented mildly on some unfair dismissals of workmen. It was the Government's ungentlemanly way of expressing its contempt for intellect.

An Italian Liberal has called the *Fatti di maggio* a mistake. An event cannot be a mistake, which is the result of accident. And in the long run the

Milanese riots have done good. They have cleared the air and created a plain issue between progress and reaction. They have cemented the union of the popular parties. They have brought about, far beyond the borders of the Extreme Left, a wide revulsion against a system, which many had acquiesced in because they had not recognized its inevitable outcome. After the first panic there was general disgust at the grotesque illegalities of the military courts. Three hundred and sixty thousand persons signed a petition for pardon, and at the end of the year a partial amnesty released 2700, who had been condemned for minor offences. Turati was returned again to Parliament by an undiminished majority, though after his sentence he was legally incapable of standing. De Amicis' election at Turin made the first Socialist breach there. So strong was the feeling against the army, that a popular general was defeated in another Piedmontese constituency, in spite of the Subalpine military tradition. At the municipal elections in the following year the popular parties carried all before them at Milan, Parma, Pavia, Piacenza, and gained heavily at Turin, while the Clericalists swept Venice and Genoa.

Meanwhile Di Rudinì had resigned as soon as Parliament met in June. The new Ministry was formed by General Pelloux, who had served in the first Di Rudinì and Giolitti cabinets, where he had been a rigid economist, willing to see a very large reduction in the army. His colleagues, like himself, were drawn mostly from the Constitutional Left, and while they professed themselves Conservatives in

maintaining order, promised reforms in every branch of legislation. The reforms were soon forgotten, partly, perhaps, because the Chamber was even more reactionary than the Government, and to some extent forced Pelloux' hands. In 1898 he promised to use only the existing law for purposes of repression, but in the following February he introduced the Bill whose troubled history has made the gravest constitutional crisis of United Italy. Its more important provisions proposed to empower the Prefects or police to forbid meetings in the open air or in places open to the public, and empower the Government to suppress any association, "whose object was to subvert by overt acts (*per vie di fatto*) social order or the constitution of the State." The Bill was met by very cogent objections. It was urged by many, even of those who agreed with its principles, that it was unwise to stir up angry controversy, when the more important of the powers contemplated in the Bill were already possessed by the Government, or, at all events, had been exercised by it for years past. Under the Italian law both the right of public meeting and the right of combination were on a very unstable footing. Charles Albert's Statute recognized no right of public meeting in the open air or in places of public resort. The Law of Public Security, by requiring the promoters of a public meeting to give twenty-four hours' notice of it to the authorities, seemed tacitly to recognize the right. But the Government had, at all events since 1890, held that this provision gave them the right to pro-

hibit beforehand meetings which had illegal ends in view, and Nicotera and Crispi and Di Rudini had acted freely on this interpretation, the first even forbidding meetings to protest against the Triple Alliance. The right of combination was not mentioned in the Statute, but it had long been practically recognized, and the Penal Code, by providing against criminal associations, implicitly admitted the legality of those which were for lawful ends. But a clause of the Code, which punished for "exciting to hatred between different social classes in a manner dangerous to the public peace," was capable of great latitude of interpretation in the hands of judges, who wanted to use it against the Socialists or any labour movement. No doubt there were good arguments for putting the law on a clear footing; but Liberals felt that it were better that restrictions of liberty should rest on an arbitrary stretching of the law than on the law itself. They dreaded that under a reactionary Government, and with judges only too amenable to its pressure, the new law would be easily turned into a weapon against labour, that every trade-union and cooperative society and chamber of labour would be at the mercy of the Government and the local cliques of employers who had its ear. Besides, the country was quiet again; it was folly to waste on an odious and unnecessary Bill time that was so urgently needed for financial and social reforms; and sensational legislation tended to make Europe think that Italy was on the verge of revolution, discredited the country, and frightened foreign capital. For several

months the Bill was suspended, but in the summer of 1899 Pelloux finally broke from the Left, and in June the Bill, made yet more stringent by a Parliamentary Committee, came again before the Chamber. Then, for the first time in the history of the Italian Parliament, it was met by determined obstruction. There had been disorderly scenes in previous Parliaments, but now the Extreme Left fought with a dogged and persistent use of obstructionist tactics. The Government grew impatient, and on June 22 announced that unless the Bill were passed within a month, its provisions would come into effect by royal decree, though they were to be submitted to Parliament at some unspecified future date. When the threat failed to daunt the obstructionists, Parliament was prorogued on the last day of June, and the *decreto-legge* came into effect on July 20.

The *decreto-legge* was defended on the ground that in the face of obstruction it was the only means of giving effect to the wishes of the majority of the Chamber. But it was flatly unconstitutional. It is true that it was not the first of its kind. Still the principle was entirely subversive of Parliamentary government, and so conscious were the ministers of its illegality, that they tried to postpone its promised discussion by Parliament, and hoped to appease public opinion by a fuller amnesty for the *Fatti di maggio*. But in February 1900 the Court of Cassation at Rome, for once showing independence, decided that the *decreto-legge* had merely the status of a Bill before Parliament, and had therefore

no legal effect. The whole unconstitutional structure collapsed, and the Ministry was compelled to bring the Bill afresh before the Chamber. Public opinion had declared more and more against it, and now it was opposed not only by the Extreme Left, but by nearly all the Constitutional Left and by the Di Rudinì section of the Right. In the first division on the Bill the Government had a majority of only 27. Amendments poured in; the Extreme Left obstructed by interminable speeches, and the first clause was still under discussion, when the majority attempted to checkmate the obstructionists by moving to appoint a Committee to draft new Standing Orders, and give at once provisional effect to their recommendations without further reference to the Chamber. That more stringent Standing Orders were necessary was acknowledged by all parties, including the Extreme Left. But it was intolerable that the Chamber should abdicate all voice in making them, and the unlucky motion only gave the obstructionists a new opportunity. There were angry scenes between Deputies and the Chair; the opposition refused to be conciliated by some nominal concessions of the Government; and on March 29 Signor Colombo, the President, put the amended motion without allowing further discussion, and in a scene of confusion declared it carried. The Constitutional Left protested against the illegality; the Extreme Left next day hissed the President out of the Chamber. But neither he nor the majority would draw back, and four days later the two Lefts and a few members of the Right walked out of the

Chamber in protest, and the new Standing Orders were approved by the remaining Deputies. Parliament was prorogued for six weeks, and the Government, satisfied with their victory or despairing of further success, demonstrated the futility of their policy by withdrawing the *decreto-legge*.

The new Standing Orders contained nothing that would have been very dangerous to minorities under an impartial President, and to an Englishman the opposition to them may seem exaggerated. The more stringent of the rules empowered the President to name a disorderly member or, in extreme cases, to suspend him for eight days; and in the case of an unduly protracted debate to ask the Chamber to limit the length of speeches or to move the closure. In another Parliament there would have been nothing unfair in this. But in a Chamber, where the President was chosen by a party vote and was generally more or less the tool of the Ministry, these powers were unsafe. The Extreme Left, with Colombo's rulings fresh in their memory, believed that it was a question of life or death to them, that it threatened their existence as a Parliamentary party. When the Chamber met on May 15, and Colombo tried again to act on the new Orders, they twice shouted him down, and the sitting broke up in confusion, while they sang Garibaldi's Hymn and shouted insulting epithets. Next day the President resigned, and the Ministry decided to dissolve Parliament and appeal to the country. Sonnino, who all through was the influence behind the scenes, had persuaded himself that the

Extreme Left would be extinguished at the new elections. Probably few shared his illusion. The country woke to a sudden interest; the Extreme Left was the only party with an electoral organization ready at hand, and the elections resulted in the triumphant increase of their party and the moral defeat of the Ministry. It came back with a small and unstable majority, and on the actual votes polled it is doubtful whether in the country it had a majority at all.¹ The wiser men in the Cabinet, including the Premier, recognized their defeat, and were willing to compromise. Their cooler followers realised that the crisis was becoming a very dangerous one. Signor Gallo, the new President, proposed that the Standing Orders of April 3 should be tacitly shelved for new ones, and the Extreme Left concurred, on condition that the clauses for suspending members and limiting the length of speeches were abandoned. It seems that everything was in train for a settlement, when the rank-and-file of the Right, supported by part of the Cabinet, revolted, and refused to come into any arrangement which ignored the April Standing Orders. This made Pelloux' position impossible, and he resigned on June 18. A new Cabinet was formed by Signor Saracco, a member of the less extreme Right, whose appointment marked a policy of conciliation towards both the Lefts. Signor Villa, the new President,

¹ Signor Torresin gives the Ministerialist vote at 663,000; that of the Constitutional Left at 271,000; that of the Extreme Left at 331,000. Another estimate gives: Ministerialist vote, 611,000; Constitutional Left, 304,000; Extreme Left, 345,000; and a few thousand Independent votes. See note 2 on p. 67,

had fresh Standing Orders drafted, which were unanimously accepted by the Chamber, though Sonnino and the irreconcilables of the Right abstained from voting. The new Orders allowed the President to suspend a disorderly member for any period not exceeding eight days, but omitted the clauses that empowered the Chamber to limit the length of speeches or move the closure.

The crisis closed to the general relief, and not even the assassination of King Humbert a few weeks later seriously disturbed the political quiet. The reactionaries did their best to exploit the crime; they tried to fix the odium on the Socialists, and clamoured for a return to coercion. They perhaps had their sympathisers in the Ministry, but both King and Premier sturdily refused to plunge the country into chaos again. It was clear that the assassin was an Anarchist, and the common fairness of the country refused to blame the Socialists for a crime, that was the fruit of theories which they had been the foremost to combat. So far the new reign has made for peace and against reaction, and the young King's sympathy with progress has probably wrought a considerable change in the inner working of politics. The Saracco Ministry is, however, in no sense a Liberal one. It has allowed the police to carry on its usual work of harrying freedom of speech and meeting; the censorship has lost nothing of its crass dislike of a free press; the compact between Government and *Mafia* in Sicily stands firm. The Cabinet is paralyzed by its own dissensions, and can only present a maimed and pitiable programme of legislation. Signor Saracco, however

amiable and sagacious, is too old for a position and a time that call for vigour. His Ministry has done the country a great service in checking reaction and bringing it through the crisis of the King's death, but it is obviously only a stop-gap. The succession must go almost inevitably to Sonnino or Giolitti, though the next Premier may be a nominee. Sonnino has appealed to the "constitutional" parties to unite in a common opposition to the Extreme Left and the Clericalists. He has a programme, which is not without its value—reform of the Civil Service, an honest administration of justice, some mitigation of protective duties. But it is vague, and leaves the urgent social problems untouched; however sincere Sonnino himself may be, he rests his strength on men who would successfully mutilate any genuine policy of reform. And if his fusion of parties were possible, which it is not, it would make revolution the almost inevitable alternative of Conservatism. In personal force and character Giolitti stands below Sonnino. But he is a Liberal from expediency and more or less from conviction; and he has made himself the champion of the popular finance, which is the crying need of the moment. He asks for drastic changes in the local duties on food, for the municipalization of public services, and the exemption of small properties from land and income tax. He knows, of course, that he could not find a majority in the old Left alone; but it is probable that he has made overtures to, at all events, the Radical section of the Extreme Left. Just as Sonnino has asked for an alliance of the constitu-

tional parties against the Extreme Left, so Signor Alessio of the Constitutional Left appeals for a union of his party and the Extreme Left against the reactionaries. There are no doubt expectations that, when the Saracco Ministry falls, the King will call to office a coalition Government of Constitutional Left and Radicals. They probably could not command a majority in the present Chamber, but they would appeal to the country on an "honest election," fought with little or no governmental pressure on the constituencies, and they hope that when the hand of the Prefects is removed, the progressive parties would gain enough seats, especially in the South, to give them the majority in a new Chamber. Probably it is the best thing that could happen in the immediate future.

NOTE

These pages were written before the recent ministerial crisis. Early in February a debate took place on the question of the Chamber of Labour at Genoa. The Government had allowed the Prefect to dissolve it, then, frightened by a general strike, allowed the Chamber to be reconstituted. Its vacillations exposed it to attack from both sides, and it was defeated by a large majority. The honours of the debate rested with the two Lefts, who were working in unison to secure a Giolitti Cabinet. The King took the sensible and constitutional course of calling the Constitutional Left to office, and a Cabinet has been formed, with Zanardelli as its nominal Premier and Giolitti as its real leader. Two seats in the Cabinet were offered to the Radicals, and would have been accepted, but for irreconcilable differences on the question of military expenditure. But though the Extreme Left are unrepresented in the new Government,

their attitude is a friendly one, and if Giolitti is true to his promises, he will have their support. The weakness of the new Government lies in the unfortunate inclusion of two members of the Right and one of the Crispi faction. This has been done, no doubt, in order to secure a sufficient Parliamentary basis and avoid the necessity of appealing to the country. But as Giolitti cannot command a majority without the support of the Extreme Left, it seems almost inevitable that he must frankly abandon any attempt to win votes from the Right, and if, as is probable, he finds himself in a minority in the present Chamber, appeal to the constituencies. If he does this, the omens are favourable for his success, and he will secure a working alliance of the two Lefts, which will clear the whole political situation, and mark a very sensible advance in Italian politics.

CHAPTER V

NORTH AND SOUTH

Southern Italy. Antagonism between North and South. Results of Unity in the South. Federalism. The *Camorra*. The *Mafia*.

As soon as Italy became a nation, one of its gravest problems was how to level up the South. And still it is "a country where two stages of civilization co-exist in the same State." It is easy to illustrate the contrast between the industrial, progressive, democratic North and the agricultural, stagnant, feudal South, where (leaving aside the buffer Central States) illiterates are nearly thrice as many, where there are three or more times as many murders and violent assaults, where gambling in the State Lottery is twice as rampant, where the death-rate is higher, where books and newspapers are comparatively rare, and postal correspondence is less than half. Here the poverty of Italy becomes destitution. The wealth per head is only half as great. The returns of land-tax, income-tax, stamp-duties, consumption of tobacco, witness to its relative inferiority. The land is comparatively the monopoly of a few. Individualism runs riot; there is little mutual trust or cooperation, and industry goes limping in consequence. It is a land for the most part given over to inertia, with little ambition of better things. The masses have small sense of cohesiveness

or hope or effort. The great landlords are mostly absentees, or, if they live on their estates, still keep something of their feudal rule. The middle classes of the towns, living in sordid idleness on the incomes of their little properties, are the pitiless tyrants of their tenants. The noble and the bourgeois rule or misrule with a sway that is seldom questioned. Nowhere in Italy is the gap so great between rich and poor. "The rich man's troubles are the poor man's joys," says a common proverb of the South. The educated Neapolitan rarely talks dialect like the Piedmontese or Lombard or Sicilian. Each sordid little town is absorbed in the feuds of the richer families, and there are few or none who think of the common good or the interest of the masses. Nowhere in Europe, says Signor Turiello, are the middle classes so sovereign.

It is the inevitable result of history. The rule of Spaniards and Bourbons, the late survival of feudalism, only abolished in a half-hearted manner at the beginning of the century, threw the country generations in arrears of civilization. When Garibaldi won the South in 1860, Cavour saw that long years yet were needed to cleanse and raise it. Had he lived, much would have been accomplished in the forty years that have passed since then. As it is, the progress has been small. Brigandage scourged the country more or less down to the early seventies. Free Trade, introduced in the last months of Bourbon rule, though on the whole it has helped the agricultural South, killed some of the protected industries, and Lombard com-

petition has perhaps done more. The South has given much for the sake of Unity. It has lost its separate army and civil service. Taxes have more than trebled. It is indeed probably true that on a balance it has gained. It has better education, better public order, more roads and railways; its trade, its shipping, its cooperative societies have multiplied. But it has gained less than it ought to have done. And it still remains a country, which through a large extent is almost feudal in its ideas, where the poor man likes to see a show of luxury in the rich, where the landlord, sometimes for good, more often for bad, rules his tenants with an absolute sway, where the reactionary party can find a servile Parliamentary majority to vote down the democratic North.

It is perhaps inevitable that there should be a good deal of bickering between North and South, as there has been more or less since 1860. The Lombard bitterly reflects that, but for the South, he would have a democratic Parliament, that it is the corruption and servility of the South that make reform so difficult, that from the South comes the impulse to militarism and colonial adventure, that the South wants State activity and therefore heavy taxes, while the North is crying to be let alone and pay less. There is much unwise talk, especially at Milan, about "the Vendée in the South" and "Southern barons." Irritating theorists maintain that the defects of the South are due to race and climate and therefore incurable, that the South Italians are non-Aryans, though, as the theory derives them from

the same stock as Greeks and Romans, it would hardly seem to be offensive. The Northerners taunt the people of Palermo with re-electing Crispi, "the Southern brigand," when his credit has fallen so low. When the Southerners wished to avenge the defeat of Adowa, the peace-loving North retorted that it wanted to sell its mules. Much of this comes of ignorance. The South may be desolate, but it is not the utterly forlorn land of Northern imagination. It is said that when Signor Zanardelli once invited some Northern Deputies to visit the prosperous town of Nocera, they thought they were going to some barren mountain village.

The South, at all events, has its sufficient answer. If it is backward politically and socially, it is because the reactionaries of the North have exploited it. The great majority of Ministers and Prefects and civil servants come from the North, and if they had tried seriously to raise the South instead of keeping it a close preserve of ministerial corruption, if they had given it their best instead of their worst administrators, it would be in far better case to-day. Even now, perhaps, if it were left free from official pressure, it would return a progressive majority; and, after all, Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia, Liguria gave as many votes to the Right in last year's elections as all the South and Sicily. The South can prove that financially and economically it has had less profit from Unity than the North; that it is taxed out of proportion to its wealth; that the State spends £2 per inhabitant in Piedmont and Liguria and Latium, while it spends less than 12s. in the Abruzzi and the Basilicata and

Calabria ; that the great bulk of public money spent on railways and ports and reclamation and irrigation has gone to the North and Centre. The South has been a very useful market for the manufactures of the North ; and the protectionist policy, while it has had mixed results in the North, has done only evil in the South. The Southerner retorts that if governmental influence vitiates politics in the South, there is as much or more bribery in the North ; that if the South excels in deeds of violence, fraud is commoner there. When it is told that its civilization is behind-hand, the South points to certain signs of progress, to the vast development of trade from its ports, to the industrial progress in Campania and at Bari—at the latter a development more rapid even than that of Lombardy,—to the dawn of political revival more or less all round the coast and especially in Apulia, to the fact that a Socialist was returned last year at Naples, where the political degradation is worst.

It is very profitless, however, to strike a ledger-balance between North and South, and the controversy is rather a dangerous one. In the South it is fanned by the reactionaries, who see an opportunity of making the South solid in opposition to the democracy of the North. Here, and especially in Lombardy, there is a certain movement, both among Moderates and Socialists, to be rid of the incubus of the South. In Sicily there always has been more or less feeling for some kind of Home Rule. And it is probable that everywhere the cleavage has been growing of late years. But there is little bottom for the fear that it may lead

to federalism. If, indeed, no more is meant by federalism than some big measure of decentralization, the creation, perhaps, of "regions" with very extensive local powers, such as has cropped up from time to time in the schemes of politicians from Minghetti to Di Rudinì, the policy is a possible and probably a desirable one. But any proposal to set up Home Rule Parliaments for North and South is an artificial one, and has no popular demand behind it. The thorough-going federalists are now, as they have been since 1856, a handful of thinkers, who speak of their policy with somewhat fearful breath. Federalism is unpopular. It provokes all the old passion for Unity, which at bottom is very strong in the hearts of the people. The Catholics have been shrewd enough to see that any suspicion of a leaning to it would be fatal to their influence. When the Moderates want to bring odium on the democrats of Milan, they invent the silly calumny that the latter are aiming at a separatist "State of Milan." Even Di Rudinì's scheme of regions was wrecked, as Minghetti's was thirty years before, by the unreasoning suspicion that it might be dangerous to Unity. And the popular instinct is right. Federalism would only intensify the friction; it would perhaps abandon the South to the monopoly of a reactionary clique, and the conscience of the North will not allow it to wash its hands of its troublesome sister. It is easy to say that the North needs local liberties, and the South a strong centralized government, but any differentiation of political liberties is unthinkable. Even less is there any danger of disrup-

tion. The very federalists protest that they want federalism to save Unity. The men who are bitterest against the South add in the same breath that Unity is dear to all. The South is monarchical by instinct ; though there may be little positive loyalty there to the existing order, there is no disloyalty, and its leaders have always been at pains to show themselves more Italian than Neapolitan. The landlords may abuse the North, but they will be faithful to a State which has given Protection for themselves and plentiful posts for their sons. And so the present ugly feud will pass away, and perhaps leave behind it a better mutual understanding and respect. It is largely born of ignorance and impatience, and to calmer minds it is likely to become supremely distasteful.

In treating of the South of Italy it is necessary to allude to the *Camorra* and *Mafia*, though their importance has generally been a good deal exaggerated. The *Camorra* is practically confined to the city of Naples, where it finds a fair field in the deep social degradation of a section of the people. Its picturesqueness lives mainly in the imagination of foreign correspondents ; in reality, despite its esoteric organization, its fantastic ritual, its strange perverted code of honour, it is a vicious, malodorous conspiracy of the dissolute and criminal poor, who live by blackmailing their fellow-poor and selling their electoral services to the Government or the local Deputies. It has its tariff of blackmail on boatmen, porters, prostitutes, gam-

bling-houses ; it drives a lucrative trade in unspeakable horrors ; it exercises a terrorism at public auctions, and takes care that no one bids against its associates. And such is the traditional fascination which it has on the imagination of the citizens, that its sway is often absolute, and the police are glad to call in its authority where they are powerless. Not long ago a cabdrivers' strike was only terminated by the intervention of the Camorrist chief. It is a lurid phenomenon and it has a double gravity. It is no casual growth ; it is the almost inevitable outcome of the squalid misery, the physical degeneration, the appalling wickedness of a section of the Neapolitan population. Even if the police tried to stamp it out, which they do not, they would be powerless. It is, says Professor Villari, the natural and necessary form that the social state of Naples takes ; the poverty of the city is probably still increasing, and it needs long years of wise and patient government to destroy the environment in which it thrives. And its yet more dangerous feature is that the Government, so far from discouraging it, has often protected it for its own purposes. There is an "upper *Camorra*"—without the ritual of its lower counterpart, but well understood,—the "kid-glove *Camorra*" of Deputies and municipal councillors and journalists and professional men, who live on jobs and malversation of public moneys. It is their protection that paralyzes the police and allows the *Camorra* to thrive, while the Government gives its tacit support to a system, which keeps the majority of the Neapolitan

constituencies for its supporters. The leaders of the *Camorra* found a quarter of a century ago that "electioneering is the only business that pays at Naples," and they have made themselves adepts at it. They are repaid by the certainty that the Government will make no serious effort to disturb their infamous trade in vice and cowardice, that it will wreck every attempt of the more honest citizens to purify the air. There are symptoms, however, that the system is beginning to totter. The Socialists here as elsewhere have made a noble fight for honest government, and the return of a Socialist Deputy for one of the Neapolitan constituencies last June was an omen of hope. Last winter the revelations in a libel case drove the "Camorrist Deputy," Casale, to resign his seat, and the united vote of the Constitutional Left and the Socialists has wrested another Neapolitan constituency from the gang. When once the upper *Camorra* is driven into hiding, the disease is half cured, but it will be long before the system loses its evil power among the criminal population of the city.

The *Mafia* of Sicily has lost most of its mystery, and with that, it is to be hoped, its glamour. Recent revelations have stripped it to what it is in reality, a blackmailing conspiracy, nearly as sordid and ugly as the *Camorra*. There is, indeed, a loose sense of the word, in which it may be called "a degenerate form of chivalry." Traditions, whose roots are lost in history, have made revenge a sacred law in Sicily; and in the small towns, where men are forced into close touch with one another, and neighbours' feuds are things of

living fierceness, a man "makes himself respected" by avenging an injury or slight with some hardly concealed crime, by murdering the offender or insulting his family honour or lifting his cattle or cutting his vines. The *Mafia* expresses the universal suspicion of the public law, sometimes exercising a rude kind of justice among its own members or policing their orange-yards. Public opinion shields the criminal, and the strong unwritten law of *omertà* holds a man disgraced, if he helps to bring the murderer or cattle-lifter to justice, and bids him perjure himself or go to prison for life rather than incriminate another. In this sense the *Mafia* spirit affects the great mass of Sicilians outside the great towns, especially the better-to-do peasants, but it is a social tradition rather than an organization, and is by no means confined to Sicily.

In its true sense the *Mafia* means a number of small gangs, the *cosche* (artichokes), whose members hold to one another closely as the artichoke's leaves. A gang seldom consists of more than a dozen members, led by some accomplished criminal, who, however, retires, except on great occasions, from active work, when his reputation of lawlessness is sufficiently high, and delegates the practical business of the gang to its younger members. The *Mafia* is hardly a secret society, for it almost certainly has no rites or formulas of initiation, and there is little or no organization common to the different gangs. It is a kind of criminal aristocracy, rarely drawn from the very poor, generally from men of the small proprietor or small tradesman class. Sometimes the chiefs are men in a

good social position; on the *latifondi* it is often used by the middlemen as part of their machinery for grinding the peasants. Usually it lives by blackmailing on the suavest and most courteous lines, and it only resorts to theft and murder, when need requires to terrorize the rare refuser of tribute or punish treachery in its own ranks.

The true *Mafia* is not a very formidable phenomenon in itself. The number of gangs is probably not numerous. They hardly exist in the east of the island, or to any serious extent in the great towns.¹ It is, perhaps, only in the villages round Palermo and in the sulphur districts of Girgenti and Caltanissetta that they are at all widespread. The danger lies in their connection with the richer classes and the Government. It is a tradition of the Sicilian noble to make himself "respected" by intervening with the authorities on behalf of criminals from his own district. Sometimes a rich proprietor pays blackmail to save his cattle and vines from outrage. But the ransom bleeds him more than an occasional raid, and the complicity of the rich is due in the main to political causes. The *Mafia*, like the *Camorra*, has made good use of the ballot-box, especially since the extension of the franchise. Where the *Mafia* is strong, it is impossible for a candidate to win a Parliamentary or local election unless he promises it his protection. Thus it has its patrons in the Senate and Chamber, who use it for political and worse ends; and the Government has its well-understood relations with the *mafiosi* grand-

¹ The best authorities differ as to their power in Palermo.

electors. The gangs are allowed free rein ; they have licenses to carry arms, while honest citizens are denied them ; they know that there will be no interference with a discreet blackmailing, provided that they terrorize the opposition voters at election time and keep the seats under their control safe for the ministerial candidates. It is this unseen hand at Rome that paralyzes the police. Perhaps at the best they are too ready to connive. They have inherited the traditions of the Bourbon officials, who permitted impunity and oblivion of small crimes, if the criminal leaders undertook to abstain from any too crying scandal. But when a police officer or magistrate, more honest or more energetic than his fellows, tries to lay a strong hand on the *Mafia*, he finds himself discountenanced by his superiors, or removed to a distant post. The scandals of the Palizzolo trial and the De Felice libel action last year are ringing through Italy, and shattering the weak remnants of faith in honest government and impartial justice. Nothing is more sinister in Italian life than the alliance of *Mafia* and Government to assist and shield high-placed swindlers. Under their joint patronage local councillors almost openly abuse their control of public moneys to fill their own pockets. The Customs' revenue at Palermo falls steadily, because the Communal Council allows its friends a lucrative contraband ; and when, at the local elections of last autumn, the Socialists tried to return men pledged to put the scandal down, the police allowed the miscreant friends of the party in power to carry arms and terrorize the electors.

The most notorious evidence of all this evil game has come to light in the still unfinished Palizzolo trial. Eight years ago Signor Notarbartolo, a governor of the Bank of Sicily, discovered certain frauds on the part of a brother-governor, Palizzolo, and sent a secret report of the facts to the Minister of Commerce. A few days later he was surprised to hear his report read at a meeting of his Board. It had mysteriously disappeared from the Department, and had found its way into the hands of the incriminated governor. A week or two passed, and Notarbartolo's body was found, with a score of wounds on it, by the side of the railway twenty miles out of Palermo. The police, it has since been proved, had very strong evidence that the murder had been committed by certain notorious *mafiosi*, and Palizzolo's relations with the *Mafia* were well known. But Palizzolo was a Deputy, and not long after was given a ribbon by Di Rudini. The Bank scandals at Rome and Naples had lately shocked all Italy, and the swindlers who had plundered the Bank of Sicily dreaded what might come to light, if Notarbartolo's murderers were brought to justice. They had the ear of the Government. The evidence was suppressed, the murder was hushed up, and it was not till six years after that the perseverance of the murdered man's sons compelled the authorities to bring Palizzolo and his confederates to justice. The trial is, at the time of writing, still unfinished, but enough has come to light to put Palizzolo's guilt beyond doubt, and prove that the police knew well and shielded the authors of the deed.

CHAPTER VI

THE POVERTY OF ITALY

Statistics of poverty. Salaries and wages. Food. Pressure of taxation. Richer or poorer?

"ITALIANS," says Signor Ferrero, "have been used for two centuries to live on half-rations;" and columns of painful statistics prove how hard is the struggle for life among the great majority of his countrymen. The wealth of Italy is pitifully small by the standard of Western Europe. Signor Bodio calculated in 1891 that its total wealth stood at £2,160,000,000; and on this basis its annual income, taking it at 11 per cent. of capital (the proportion taken by M. de Foville for France), would be £237,000,000, or £7. 16s. 8d. per head of population. M. de Foville collected in 1893 the best available statistics of wealth in other Western countries, and showed that the average income per head was in Great Britain over £31, in France £26, in Saxony £20. 7s., in Prussia £17. 2s., in Austria £8. An Italian enjoys less than half the income of an Englishman or Frenchman or Prussian. Calculations, based on the local family-tax, go to show that out of 10,000 heads of families, nearly 8000 have incomes under £40, only three have incomes above £2000.

The poverty is evidenced by the low rate of salaries and wages. The incomes of the professional classes

rule low. One or two barristers may make £4000 a year, and a few doctors perhaps £3000; here and there a civil engineer may earn £800 to £1200; but such cases are exceedingly rare. The average professional income of a barrister cannot be put much above £250, that of a town doctor at £300, that of a village doctor at £100. In the whole army and navy, the bench, diplomacy, and civil service, there are only 101 individuals with salaries exceeding £400. The permanent head of the Ministry of Education has £360, a head inspector £160 to £280. The highest salary in the Post Office is £320. A colonel's pay is £280, a captain's is £128. A pretor (stipendiary magistrate) has £120, including the allowance for his house. A clerk in the Ministry of Education has £80 to £160; in the Post Office he sometimes has no more than £140 after thirty years of service. A stationmaster gets £48 to £180, and his house; the maximum salary of an elementary teacher is £53 for a man and £42 for a woman. A foreman engineer in a large shop earns, as a rule, £3 to £3. 12s. a week.¹

The wages of artisans and labourers are correspondingly low. The following figures of daily wages are based on a large number of data :—

¹ See also below, pp. 241, 260.

	Extreme Range.						Usual Rates.							
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Boiler-makers, fitters, and smiths . . . }	0	1	2½	to	0	5	7	0	2	5	to	0	3	7
Founders	0	1	7	"	0	6	5	0	2	5	"	0	4	0
Enginemen	0	1	5	"	0	4	9½	0	2	2½	"	0	2	9½
Masons	0	1	2½	"	0	5	0½	0	2	0	"	0	2	5
Carpenters	0	1	2½	"	0	5	7½	0	2	0	"	0	2	9½
Chemical workers . . .	0	1	0	"	0	3	2½	0	2	5	"	0	3	2½
Cotton operatives . . .	0	1	3	"	0	2	6½	0	1	2½	"	0	2	0
Woolen operatives . . .	0	0	9½	"	0	3	7½	0	1	6	"	0	3	0
Miners	0	1	0½	"	0	3	7	0	1	2½	"	0	2	3
Unskilled labourers . .	0	0	11½	"	0	4	0	0	1	2½	"	0	2	0
¹ Agricultural labourers—														
Regular	0	0	4	"	0	1	4	0	0	8	"	0	1	2
Casual (winter) . . .	0	0	1½	"	0	0	9½	0	0	5	"	0	0	9½
" (summer)	0	0	5	"	0	1	7	0	0	9½	"	0	1	7
" (harvest)	0	2	0	"	0	4	0	0	2	0	"	0	2	5
Women—														
Silk operatives	0	0	5	"	0	1	7	0	0	6	"	0	1	0½
Cotton operatives . . .	0	0	6	"	0	2	5	0	0	9½	"	0	1	4
Wool operatives	0	0	6	"	0	2	0	0	0	8½	"	0	1	3½
Agricultural labourers	0	0	5	"	0	0	9½	0	0	5	"	0	0	7½

It must be noted in connection with this table:—

1. That it takes no account of piece-work, which is common. In some industries this means an addition of 15 to 60 per cent. (perhaps on the average 40 per cent.) to the day-wage.

2. That there is still a good deal of Sunday labour, though it is tending to become rare in, at all events, the larger works. The weekly wage of some artisans and labourers must therefore be estimated on a seven-days' basis. On the other hand, a casual agricultural labourer works and is paid for only from 240 to 270 days, and in some of the silk-mills employment appears to be still more irregular.

3. Many of the women operatives in mills have

¹ Paid, as a rule, largely in kind.

free lodgings and food provided below cost price. The agricultural labourer often has his perquisites.

4. In estimating family incomes, it must be remembered that women's work is very general. The wife of an agricultural labourer almost always works in the fields, except in Sicily, and her wages are generally from one-half to three-quarters those of a man.

The following table represents approximately the average wages in certain trades as compared with those of other countries¹:—

	Italy.	France.	England.	Germany.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Boilermakers	3 0	...	6 4	2 11
Masons	2 3	2 11	6 4	2 9½
Carpenters	2 5	3 2½	6 1½	2 8½
Miners	1 11	3 0	...	1 9
Agricultural labourers . . .	10	2 1½	2 2½	1 6
Women in textile mills . . .	10½	...	2 0	1 1½

Hours of labour are, as a rule, 8 in the Government's tobacco-works; 9 in the Government's dockyards; 8 to 10 in most mines; 9 to 10 in railway-works; 10 to 11 for engineers and probably the majority of industries; 9 to 12½ and occasionally as high as 14 in textile mills. There have been many strikes lately for a reduction of hours in the mills. Railway servants have had till recently to work sometimes for as much as 18 hours at a stretch, but a Government order of last year prescribes

¹ English figures based on Mr. Bowley's papers in *Statistical Journal* (summer wages) and his *Wages in the Nineteenth Century*; French figures on de Foville, *La France économique* (1890); German figures on Lavollée (1882), de Foville, and other information. The different dates, of course, lessen the value of the comparison, and it must be remembered that some wages, e.g. of miners in England, fluctuate widely from year to year.

that they shall have a normal rest of 8 consecutive hours and never less than 7. The hours of agricultural labourers vary, of course, according to the seasons, but they are always long as compared with those in England. The extreme limit is probably reached in the oliveyards of Apulia, where picked men work in the presses for 19 or 20 hours day after day. Holidays are few; the Clericalist employer closes his works on the great festivals of the Church, the Liberal employer on Government holidays, which are almost identical; in some places little work is done on Mondays.

The food of the people corresponds to the low level of wages. Wheat is the staple cereal, but to a much smaller extent than in other Western countries. Maize, eaten as bread or polenta, more or less takes its place among the peasants and the poorer-paid workmen of the North—sometimes, as in the Venetian and Romagnuol highlands, to the entire exclusion of wheaten bread. In 1885 wheaten bread was the normal food in 5380 communes, maize or other inferior cereals in 2878. The use of maize is not entirely due to its cheapness; to the ill-fed peasant it gives a sense of repletion, and he will eat it by preference even when better food is available. When of good quality and well-cooked, it is not innutritious, but when gathered unripe and kept in damp places it produces the terrible disease of *pellagra*. *Pellagra* is not, as it has been called, a disease of poverty, nor is it due to the consumption of maize in itself. The Wallachian peasant, according to M. de Laveleye, lives exclusively on maize; but *pel-*

lagra is unknown to him. It is essentially a disease of the Po valley; and though it exists in parts of Central Italy, it is only prevalent in the lower parts of Lombardy, Venetia, and Emilia. Statistics of *pel-lagra* are unreliable; but there is unanimous evidence that it is on the decrease (owing largely to the adoption of better methods for drying maize), and, at all events, it is not nearly so serious a plague as malaria.

Even when allowing for the use of maize, rye, and barley, the quantity of cereals consumed by an Italian is abnormally low. It is estimated that on the average he eats in the year 205 lbs. of wheaten flour, 65 lbs. of maize, and about 40 lbs. of other inferior cereals, or 310 lbs. in all. At Turin a workman's family of six in moderate circumstances eats 1469 lbs. of wheat, macaroni, and rice. An Italian soldier is allowed 746 lbs. of wheaten bread and macaroni, which represents, perhaps, 615 lbs. of flour. An English agricultural labourer, with a much more varied diet, eats from 400 to 440 lbs. of wheaten flour; the inmate of an English workhouse has 365 lbs. of bread and 62 lbs. of meal. A Spaniard's average consumption of wheaten flour is said to be 471 lbs., a Belgian's is 441 lbs.¹

The deficiency is even more apparent in other articles of food. Though the consumption of meat rises steadily, it is still very small. Various estimates put it at 25, 27, or 39 lbs. per head. At Rome it was 88 lbs. in 1893, in Apulia it is probably as low as 10 lbs. At Turin working people in average circumstances have 28 lbs. per head, those in better circum-

¹ Wheat is taken as making seven-ninths of its weight in flour.

stances 50 lbs. An English workhouse pauper has 57 lbs. The consumption of sugar has decreased by one-quarter since heavy duties were imposed to protect native beet-sugar, and it averages barely over 5 lbs. per head. An average and better-to-do workman at Turin consumes 10 and 15 lbs. respectively. The use of salt is brought to a minimum among the poor by the iniquitous salt-tax.¹ There are no available figures to show what the domestic consumption of it is, but to some of the peasants its taste is barely known. Sometimes they will cook their polenta in sea-water, though this is an offence against the Excise, and women are still arrested or fired at, if they are found drawing from the sea; and it is said that a poor child in Venetia, if given the run of a kitchen, prefers to eat salt rather than sugar. On the other hand, the consumption of all kinds of vegetables and pulse is probably above the average, and the use of olive oil amounts to 12 lbs. per head. A good deal of cheese is used. The chief drink is, of course, wine, and in this the average consumption is not far short of that of France, and higher than that of Spain. The Italian drinks on the average 20 gallons per head; in some towns of the North and Centre he drinks from 31 to 49 gallons, Rome having a bad pre-eminence. In some districts, as in the province of Lecce, wine costs 9d. to 13d. the gallon, and its use is general. The returns of 1885 report that it is drunk by all classes in 3254 communes out of 8262. The use of beer and spirits is very small, that of tea is practically nil, that of

¹ See below, p. 139.

coffee a little under 1 lb. per head. Each inhabitant smokes on the average $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. of tobacco. And even poor as it is, the Italian workman's food absorbs more than a normal proportion of his income. A report to the last Socialist Congress estimates that only 15 per cent. is left for clothes, rent, and all other expenses. Engel's researches show that the normal surplus of the income of the poorer classes, after providing for food, is 30 per cent. In the case of Le Play's Nottingham tanner it was 31 per cent. House-rent is low in Italy, but, even when allowance is made for this fact, the expenditure on clothes must be very small.

One is bound to conclude that, in spite of his large consumption of vegetables and fruit, including a good deal of pulse of high nutritive value, the typical Italian is underfed. Cases of death from starvation are very rare, but there is a terrible permanent lack of food. Recent inquiries into the food of school children have proved that at Perugia one-third have little or no dinner, that at Pavia one in ten, at Milan one in twenty-eight, have no dinner at all. The case of the adults is probably worse. And yet the men, who have been nurtured on this miserable fare, are perhaps the most industrious peasants of the world. There is no more cruel or untrue taunt than that the Italian, be he from North or South, is idle. The Italians are the navvies of the Continent; they have pierced the tunnels of the Alps; they have built the harbours of Calais and Marseilles; they have made the railways through a large slice of Europe. Thousands cross the Atlantic every autumn to reap the harvest in the

Argentine, then return to gather in their own. The old Roman energy seems living in the underfed and overworked labourers of modern Italy.

The typical day's food of an artisan in the North is given as follows by M. Lavollée. He makes his breakfast chiefly of bread, sometimes with milk or coffee, more often with cheese or bacon and vegetables or fruit, sometimes of bread alone. At noon he has his dinner of *minestra*, the standing Italian mash of vegetables or pulse or rice or macaroni in its many forms, cooked with lard or oil, and variously flavoured. Sometimes he repeats his breakfast fare at the afternoon *merenda*. For supper he has another *minestra*. The Neapolitan, who seldom cooks at home and takes his meals at an eating-house, will consume two to three pounds of bread a day, macaroni cooked with various relishes, potatoes, a *minestra* of vegetables, much fruit and salad, and some salt-fish or pigs' fry. The following table, which gives the weekly consumption of (A) an artisan in the North and Centre, (B) an artisan in the South, (C) a labourer in the North, is said to be based on a series of monographs.¹ To these we add recent calculations made at Turin of the weekly consumption by an artisan's family of six, (D) in average circumstances, (E) in good circumstances.²

¹ *Annuario statistico Italiano, 1889-90*. Some of the figures would seem to be above the average.

² *Il municipio di Torino e il partito socialista*.

	Individuals.			Families of Six.	
	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
	Ozs.	Ozs.	Ozs.	Ozs.	Ozs.
Fresh meat	27	14½	7½	51	92
Salt meat or fish . .	12	3½	7½	very little	7
Bread	168	225	} 71 }	325	367
Maccaroni	32	107		55	57
Rice	30	7½	18	67	68
Maize bread or polenta	50	nil	142	?	?
Cheese	12	14	7½	15 ¹	24 ¹
Vegetables	71	142	71	?	?
Wine	8 pints	9 pints	2 pints	10 pints	14 pints
Brandy	a little	nil	nil	?	?

¹ Including butter.

M. Lavollée estimates the cost of an artisan's food at 9½d. per diem. A silk-spinner of Como gives that of himself, wife, and child at 1s. 3½d.

The food of the peasantry has been elaborately described in the *Inchiesta agraria* of 1883, and by other writers. It varies indefinitely from that of the prosperous farmers of the higher Val d'Aosta, who fare as well as a Swiss peasant, to that of the labourers in the rice-fields near Vicenza, who have nothing all day but the polenta they bring with them and water from the ditches, or the out-of-work labourers of Calabria and Sicily, who in spring-time often live on wild lentils or the raw heads of *Hedysarium coronarium*. But there is no great difference in the fare of the great majority of farmers and better class of labourers. The peasant of the Po valley and Venetia lives mainly on maize polenta or maize bread, often badly cooked, with more or less of *minestra* made of vegetables and pulse and

generally rice, cooked with a little lard or oil. In the hill districts he often has chestnuts; in many places he grows potatoes on his allotment; in a few more prosperous spots he has wheaten bread in summer. Some cheese, an occasional sausage or taste of bacon or salt-fish, frogs from the ponds and ditches, here and there milk or eggs, make the only exceptions to a vegetable fare. The larger farmers eat meat and poultry, but to the great majority the taste of meat is only known on rare festivities. The peasant's wine is scarce and bad, though taverns increase and there are complaints of much drinking on holidays; his water is too often polluted. In the hill country of Piedmont and the Riviera the food is better. Wheat and rye bread often take the place of maize. There is more consumption of cheese and chestnuts, meat is not so rare, the wine is better and more plentiful, here and there coffee is generally drunk. In Emilia and the Marches and the lower parts of Tuscany there is a fair consumption of wheaten bread, though maize is still the staple food, and eggs, meat, poultry, and wine are not so rare as in Lombardy. In the hill districts of Tuscany and southwards from them (except along the coast from Rome to Naples and in parts of the Abruzzi), the use of maize is much reduced and wheaten bread becomes the staple food, though here and there in the poorer districts rye and barley bread take its place. Otherwise the food does not greatly differ from that of the North, except that figs and other fruit are abundantly used, that perhaps more pulse is consumed, and that in

Sicily, at all events, wine is generally and largely drunk. In large districts in the extreme south of Apulia the labourers and small farmers live on black barley bread (baked twice or thrice a year and soaked before it can be eaten), sheep's cheese, potatoes, chicory and young poppy heads for salad, and snails. The harvesters in the oliveyards live on beans or peas and oil, the women on baked and crushed maize. The migrant labourers of the Agro Romano eat nothing but polenta or maize bread, often without salt, and will greedily devour the carrion flesh of cattle that have died of disease.

The following give the quantities of food consumed in a week by (A) a family of 13 persons (of three generations), including 6 young children, at Este, in lower Venetia; (B) a fairly well-to-do farmer's family of 7 persons at Rovigo; (C) a regularly employed labourer's family of 7 persons, also at Rovigo; (D) a day-labourer's family of 5 persons in Romagna; (E) a *mezzaiuolo* farmer's family of 16 persons (probably of three generations) near Fermo, in the Marches; (F) a *mezzaiuolo's* family of 4 adults and a small child, in rather above average circumstances, at Reggio-Emilia. A, D, E, F, are budgets of actual families; B, C, are estimates.¹

¹ *Inchiesta agraria*; Countess Pasolini, *Monografie di alcuni operai braccianti nel comune di Ravenna*; Rabbeno in *Economic Journal*, Sept. 1894. Other budgets may be found in Mantovani, *Bilanci di Trenta Famiglie* and *Bulletin de l'institut international de statistique*, 1890.

	A. (13 per- sons).	B. (7 per- sons).	C. (7 per- sons).	D. (5 per- sons).	E. (16 per- sons).	F. (5 per- sons.)
Wheaten flour	10 lbs.	26 lbs.	13 lbs.	21½ lbs.	20 lbs.	49 lbs.
Maize . . .	95 "	42 "	59 "	17 "	152 "	13 "
<i>Frumentello</i> . .	13 "
Oil and condi- ments . . .	9½d.	?	?	9½d.	1.3 pints	7d.
Meat and bacon . . .	1 pig in the year	10½lbs.	nil	2d. {	1 pig in the year	2s. }
Poultry, eggs, cheese, milk	{ ?	2s. 4d.	3½d.	4 eggs	?	?
Salt . . .	1 lb.	?	?	½ lb.	4½ lbs.	1 lb.
Wine and <i>vinello</i> . . .	{ 2½ { gals. }	probably nil	probably nil	{ nil	5 gals.	9.7 gals.
Clothes and shoes . . .	£4 a year	£12 a year	£3. 4s. a year	£1. 19s. a year	{ ? }	{ £4. 1s. 7d. a year }
Firewood . . .	{ £2 a year }	{ ? }	{ ? }	10s. 5d. a year	{ ? }	{ £1. 12s. a year }
Total cost . .	?	£1. 1s. 6d.	8s. 4½d.	8s. 6½d.	£1. 8s. 8d.	15s. 7d.

No allowance is made for vegetables or fruit, which are grown at home, and consumed to a large extent.

The meals of a fairly well-to-do Italian peasant near Alba in Piedmont are thus described: "In the morning he works, except in winter, two or three hours before 7.0, when he has a little breakfast of bread and cheese, with capsicums, celery, or radishes in oil, and three-quarters of a pint of thin wine. Breakfast lasts about half-an-hour. At 11.0 he has dinner from a great round dish of polenta, yellow as gold and smoking like a volcano, or else a *minestra* of maccaroni or rice and vegetables, cooked with lard, except on fast days, when oil takes the place of lard. The men sit in the kitchen round the table, the women serve and eat, the boys squat by the chimney or on the doorstep, eating greedily, porringer on knee. If polenta is the dish, the women prepare a sauce, and what sauce it is!

Our peasant women all come from the same school of cookery, and all their sauces are made of oil and garlic and anchovies. Sometimes they eat with the polenta a kind of sheep's cheese, and on fast days salt-fish or rarely eggs. With a glass or two of the usual thin wine dinner finishes. The peasant rises, wipes his lips with his apron or his hand, and goes contented back to work and digest the two or three big slices of polenta he has inside him. He is never troubled with indigestion, and barely three hours later he is back again to eat his *merenda* of bread and cheese and salad. The *merenda* lasts, like breakfast, half-an-hour, and like it, it is taken under the shade of a tree. Finally, at dusk he leaves his work and comes home to find supper ready. If they eat polenta at dinner, they eat *minestra* now, and *vice versa*. After supper they go to bed, except a few naughty men, who sit up to have a pipe." Fare like this, however monotonous and lacking in animal food, is plentiful in quantity and fairly nutritious ; and probably the great majority of farmers and better-to-do labourers fare no worse. But there are thousands of casual labourers and small peasant-proprietors, especially in the poorer districts of Venetia, who taste little but polenta and maize bread.

"Italy," says Professor Nitti, "is naturally a poor country, so that even if it were well governed, it would still be poor." But misgovernment sharpens the sting of poverty. The scanty food of the Italian is scantier still, because taxation is out of all proportion to the resources of the country, and protective duties rob the poor to fill the pockets of the rich landlord and manu-

facturer. According to the calculations of M. Delivet, Italy pays a higher percentage of its income in taxes than any of the larger European States except Spain. The State takes 17 per cent., as against 12 in France, 8 in Germany, 6 in England. Another calculation, founded on M. de Foville's figures, would place taxation at 30 per cent. of income. And in Italy the taxes fall heaviest on the poor. "It is progressive taxation topsy-turvy," says Professor Villari, "the less a man has, the more he pays." Fifty-four per cent. of the taxes, according to the figures of Signor Flora, fall on the poor and working classes. An artisan or labourer, even if he drinks no wine, pays from 10 to 20 per cent. of his wages in direct or indirect taxation. Wheat pays a duty to the State of 13s. 6d. the quarter; there is a local duty in the larger towns on flour, bread, and macaroni up to 10 or 15 per cent. of their value; the adverse exchange and the milling monopoly, which the tariffs ingeniously encourage, raise the price of bread higher still; and when wheat is delivered at Genoa at 31s. 6d.¹ the quarter, bread is sold at 8½d. the quartern loaf. In the autumn of last year wheat, after paying duty, was selling at about 45s. the quarter, and bread, where there was no local duty, at about 7½d. the quartern loaf. At Milan last January inferior bread sold at 7d. Maize flour is taxed nearly ½d. the lb., sugar over 4d., coffee nearly 7d., cheese 1d., paraffin 2d. Where the local duties too are high, as at Genoa,

¹ The lowest price at which American wheat has been delivered at Genoa is said to be 21s. 7d. According to the formula of the Paris municipality, when wheat costs 50s. 6d. the quarter, inferior bread should sell at 6d. the quartern loaf.

the price of wheaten flour is increased in all 62 per cent., maize flour 54 per cent., sugar 300 per cent., coffee 75 per cent., meat and milk 26 per cent., wine 120 per cent., paraffin 337 per cent. At Rome in 1899 flour cost 2d. per lb., sugar 7½d. per lb. A "tax on health" raises the price of salt (except in Sicily and Sardinia) from its natural cost of 11 lbs. for 1d. to nearly 2d. the lb. At Turin and Palermo a working man pays between 3 and 4 per cent. of his income in local duties.

The direct taxes are hardly less heavy. The income-tax, assessed on personalty only, varies between 7½ and 20 per cent.¹ It is true that it is mitigated, so far as the commercial and professional classes are concerned, by the ingenuity with which the middle-class Italian defrauds the Exchequer. A high official in the Inland Revenue has declared from long experience that the majority of industries in the North manage largely or wholly to escape income-tax. But apart from fraud, there is practically no remedy against unfair assessments; and though very small incomes are partially exempted,² the tax weighs heavily on the lower-middle class, and not even the artisan goes entirely free. Nearly 10,000 working-men, earning daily wages be-

¹ Twenty per cent. on income derived from the funds, or local loans, or shares of societies with a State guarantee or subsidy; 15 per cent. on other interest; 10 per cent. on commercial and industrial incomes; 9 per cent. on professional incomes or salaries; 7½ per cent. on salaries of State or local employees.

² Commercial and industrial incomes are exempt, if (including income from all other sources) they are less than £21. 6s. 8d., and partially exempt up to £42. 13s. 4d.; professional incomes and salaries are exempt up to £25. 12s., and partially exempt up to £51. 4s.; salaries of State and local employees are exempt up to £32, and partially exempt up to £40.

tween 2s. and 2s. 9½d., have, with doubtful legality, been compelled to pay income-tax, and though the Pelloux Government proposed to exempt all below the latter figure, it intended to strictly enforce payment from all whose wages rose above it.

But it is on the small farmer and proprietor that the direct taxes fall heaviest. He pays income-tax (unless his landlord relieves him of it) even when he makes no profit, and dares not improve his land for fear of having his assessment raised. The small proprietor pays succession duty at the same rate as the large one.¹ The farmer's cattle, if not actually used for work, must pay the communal cattle-tax. And, heaviest of all, land-tax and rates absorb on the average from 20 to 25 per cent. of the net profit from his farm.² It is true that the proportion is not much higher than in England, and lower than in Austria. But it falls with terrible severity on the poorer farmer and proprietor. There are on the annual average 13,000 sales of land on distress for non-payment of taxes, and though they are almost confined to the South and Sardinia, and the expropriated owners are often allowed to return, yet it is a cruel index of the poverty of part of Italy. Year by year the Government has promised to exempt

¹ At the time of going to press the Zanardelli Cabinet has decided to introduce a graduated succession duty.

² Fifty per cent. on the assessed returns, but the assessments are very low. Jacini estimated the real charge at 30 per cent. Signor Flora puts taxes and interest on mortgages together at 30 to 50 per cent. The mortgages on Italian land at the end of 1898 were £391,000,000, and the capital value of rent charges on it were £237,000,000. Probably three-quarters of these are charged on agricultural land. Since 1895 mortgages have tended to diminish.

the smallest properties, but except for temporary and local remittals, nothing is done. Even the charities, which are often the poor man's only resource in sickness and old age, see a fifth of their income swallowed by the State. Well has it been said that Italy is the best country for the rich man and the worst for the poor.

Still, sore as is his poverty, and grievous the burden of misgovernment, Italy has gained since 1860. It is true that progress has been slow and discontinuous, that it has lagged lamely behind expectation; that while wealth has increased 17 per cent., taxes have risen 30 per cent. It is true that there is wide despair and discontent, that Italians say "we were better off when we were worse off." But none the less, intellectually and morally the gain has been large; materially, the current is small and has its backwashes, but it runs. There is a slow gain in wealth. The country is richer by at least £2,000,000 a year; the savings-banks alone show annual accumulations nearly to that figure. At whatever present sacrifice, the nation has covered itself with railways and roads, has built harbours, has reclaimed large stretches of land, has given itself a system of education, has laid the foundations of an industrial future. Wages rose rapidly, both in industry and agriculture, between 1860 and 1885, though it is true that since 1890 they have been on the whole stationary, and have fallen in more cases than they have risen. In spite of protective tariffs, food and clothes are cheaper. In the seventies it cost forty-nine hours of labour in certain industries to buy a bushel of

wheat, in the nineties it cost twenty-six. Life is longer and more healthy, clothes are better, food is perhaps more plentiful and varied. And if wants have grown faster than satisfaction, if discontent with the present is strong, it makes only another spur to progress. What vitality and recuperative power there is, will be seen in the history of the industrial and agricultural development of the last few years.

CHAPTER VII

MANUFACTURES AND TRADE

Growth of trade. Chief industries. Industrial capital. Skill of artisans. Electrical power. Prospects of industry. Protection and industry.

So far as the poverty is due to want of industries, it bids fair to be sensibly relieved, so notable is the advance of the last few years. The hopes of the earlier patriots that Italian Unity would be followed by a great industrial revival were very slow to be realized. At first there was a certain progress. The foreign trade, which stood at about £60,000,000 in 1862, increased by one-half in the seventies. But in the next decade, though the imports increased, the exports remained stationary, and after the introduction of the protective tariff of 1887 both imports and exports fell considerably. From 1870 to 1897 the foreign trade practically stood still, and the exports showed a progressive decline. In the last three years there has been a startling change. The exports, from an average of less than £39,000,000 in the previous decade, rose to £48,000,000 in 1898, and £57,000,000 in 1899, though they have fallen off to £53,500,000 in 1900, partly owing to the failure of the olive crop. The imports, from an average of £48,000,000, rose to £56,500,000 in 1898, £60,000,000 in 1899, and

nearly £67,000,000 in 1900. The great bulk of the increase in exports has been in manufactured articles, especially silk, and more than half the increase in imports has been in raw materials, machinery, and coal.

There is, in fact, every sign that Italy is at the commencement of a remarkable industrial expansion. Her most important industry is silk, and the exports of silk have risen from £13,250,000 in 1897 to nearly £21,000,000 in 1899, and over £11,000,000 in the first seven months of 1900. Italy has long been one of the great silk-producing countries, and she now supplies considerably over one-third of the whole silk crop of the world. Her spinning-mills, with a million and a half of spindles, absorb not only her own silk crop, but an importation of £4,000,000 in cocoons and single-reeled thread, and they employ nearly 150,000 operatives. And not only is the spinning industry making steady progress, but an important weaving industry is growing up. Till lately the great bulk of silk thread was sent abroad to be woven. But in the last twenty years the old hand-loom and their beautiful broads have disappeared, and great textile mills with over 7000 power-loom have sprung up in the provinces of Como and Milan. Already they produce £4,000,000 worth of stuff, and the exports have nearly doubled since 1896. The dyeing is still mostly done in France, but a Lyons firm is planting a dyeing establishment near Como. The cotton industry is younger and much smaller, but it is developing even more rapidly. Its produce, which hardly exceeded £2,000,000 in 1876,

was worth £12,000,000 in 1899; it employs 80,000 operatives; it has almost entirely conquered the home market,¹ and the exports increased from £1,260,000 in 1897 to £2,280,000 in 1899. The bulk of the export trade goes to South America and the Levant, but Italian prints are said to be competing successfully with English at Paris. The wool industry is the least important of the textiles, but it too shows the same expansion, more than doubling its exports between 1897 and 1899, and beginning to manufacture the finer kinds of cloth. The metal industries are almost equally prosperous. The production of iron and steel is still small, amounting to only £2,600,000, if the official statistics may be trusted. But almost all the steel work for home consumption is made in Italy, and though the exports are still unimportant, they have grown eight-fold in six years. The steel-works at Terni, with their branch at Savona, can turn out 800 tons of steel a day. The armour and cannon for men-of-war is made entirely here or at the Armstrong works at Pozzuoli. Before 1887 almost all railway material was imported, now almost all is made at home, and some is exported. A firm at Sampierdarena employs 4000 men in the manufacture of locomotives and boilers. All the electric plant for home use, except some dynamos, is made in Italy. The works founded by the late Signor Tosi at Legnano send boilers and engines, especially for electrical transmission, practically all over the world. The Pirelli works at Milan rank

¹ It is said that Italian cottons are often sold in South Italy as English, and fraudulently marked as such.

among the four or five largest in existence for the supply of electric plant, manufacturing over £500,000 worth a year, and exporting largely to England and elsewhere. Both these firms won gold medals at Paris last year, and the judges spoke of the Tosi works as ranking among the first engineering shops of Europe. An American company is starting a factory at Milan to supply material for electric traction. Shipbuilding has had a great stimulus from the increased bounties, which have been given since 1886; and according to figures recently published by Signor Franchetti, the ships laid down in the last four years will nearly double the tonnage of the steam mercantile marine. New yards have been built at Leghorn, Venice, and Palermo, and the much more important yards at Genoa and in its neighbourhood have been very busy, even building ships of war for foreign Governments. Genoa has already a trade that nearly rivals that of Marseilles, and when the Simplon Tunnel is opened, it is likely to be indisputably the first port of the Mediterranean. Large sums are being expended by the Government and private enterprise to put it in a position to cope with its fast-expanding trade. Venice, too, is rapidly becoming an important port.

Everything shows that Italy is learning fast to overcome her industrial drawbacks and profit from her natural advantages. The difficulties that have hindered her development in the past have been want of capital, want of technical knowledge, want of coal, the high cost of machinery, inefficient and expensive railways, heavy taxation, and her distance from the

great markets of raw material. The latter she cannot evade in the case of many of her industries; the burdens that come of bad government remain as heavy as ever; but such obstacles as lie within their influence the manufacturers of Italy have sturdily set themselves to remove. Italian capital, it is true, is still shy of industrial investments; and though the new loan of 1896, which yields a net $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., was subscribed several times over in the country, and municipalities can sometimes borrow at from 3 to 4 per cent., yet, according to Signor Maggiorino Ferraris, the bulk of industrial capital cannot be had at less than 6 to 9 per cent. There seems now, however, to be a fair supply of it. Industrial shares have risen rapidly in value since 1894, and private capital reaches industry through the banks. The paid-up capital of railways, tram-lines, shipping companies, and limited industrial and commercial companies has increased from £54,000,000 in 1887 to £67,000,000 in 1897. French capital has been almost entirely withdrawn since 1887, but its place has been more than supplied by German and Swiss, and in a smaller degree by Belgian and English capital.¹ It is estimated that £120,000,000 of foreign capital is invested in the Italian debt and various industrial and commercial businesses. If, as seems more likely now, the national finances improve, and the premium on gold disappears, the uncertainty

¹ English capital especially in the sulphur and wine trade of Sicily, the wine trade of Tuscany, Venetian hotels and glass-works, bonded warehouses at Genoa, chemical works at Riva Trigosa, the citric acid and essential oils industries in Sicily, perhaps in the Carrara mines.

which has frightened investors will largely be removed, and abundant capital, attracted by the high rate of interest, is likely to flow in from home and abroad.

The want of technical skill is already nearly a thing of the past. A few years ago most of the managers were Swiss or Germans, and the skilled workmen, at all events in the steel and engineering industries, were Germans or Belgians or English. The country can now supply its own men. Thanks to the technical schools, a new class of native managers and foremen has sprung up. And the Italian artisan is showing that he possesses high industrial qualities. He requires, perhaps, rather more supervision than the Englishman or German, but he is quick, intelligent, sober, easily adapting himself to new methods and new machinery. At Signor Tosi's works the men are now all Italians, and are preferred to Swiss or Germans; at the Terni steel-works they have supplanted the Belgians, who at first did all the higher class of work. It is said that, in his longer hours of work, the Italian cotton operative turns out as much as the English.

Besides her artisans, Italy has another great commercial asset in her rivers, which, with their inexhaustible supply of mechanical energy, bid fair to free her from her dependence on foreign coal. Italy has practically no coal of her own, and its want still makes a serious difficulty. Freights of coal from England to Genoa are about nine shillings a ton, and in 1899 the country imported nearly 5,000,000 tons, though a large proportion of this went to railways

and shipping. But the use of steam is being rapidly superseded. Various estimates put the potential quantity of energy derivable from rivers at between 2,500,000 and 5,000,000 horse-power (equivalent to an annual consumption of between £25,000,000 and £50,000,000 worth of coal). Already the amount of electrical energy generated from rivers equals an effective horse-power of 380,000, and possibly more. The recent exhibition at Como revealed what the electrical engineers of Italy are doing, and Professor Sylvanus Thompson has borne witness to the success with which they are applying electricity to industrial uses. The Edison Company's generating station at Paderno on the Adda supplies 13,000 horse-power to the factories of Milan and Monza, together with power for the tramways and lighting of Milan. Another company supplies from its works at Vizzola on the Ticino 10,000 effective horse-power to the factories at Gallarate and Legnano and their neighbourhood. Several plants as important as these are now being installed. A plan is on foot to transmit energy for the Venetian industries from Lago Santa Croce. Biella, after five years of intolerable delay in obtaining the necessary concession from Government, is preparing to supply itself from the Sesia. Rome derives the power for its trams and lighting from Tivoli, and if the commune (fearful of losing tourists' fees) permitted the use of the larger falls, it might mean the conversion of Rome into an industrial city, and influence all Italian politics. Large shops, like the steel-works at Cornigliano and the lead-works at Pertusola near Spezia, are worked

entirely by electricity. It is used to smelt copper, and in the manufacture of caustic soda and carbide of calcium for acetylene.¹ An electric furnace is being erected to smelt iron in the Val Camonica, and, if successful, will open out a chance of utilizing the extensive beds of ore in Elba and North Lombardy, now hardly touched in consequence of the high price of coal. Milan was the first town in Europe to light itself with electricity, and now over 400 towns (mostly small ones, where there had been no gas) have electric light. Electric traction is in use on 370 miles of tram-lines. Electric trains have run for two years past between Milan and Monza, and are now running between Modena and Bologna. Electric traction is about to be introduced on the seventy-three miles of rail between Milan and Arese, on the sixty-six miles from Lecco to Sondrio, and on the new line from Brescia to Caffaro; and there is a proposal to use it on the great trunk line from Rome to Reggio in Calabria. An electric line is projected between Rome and Naples. It is hardly rash to prophecy that, before many years have passed, Italian industries and railways will be worked almost exclusively by electricity; and if the present high price of coal continues, it is obvious what an advantage in the markets of the world will be possessed by a country that can largely dispense with it.

On a general view it seems probable that Italy will soon become a very considerable competitor in the

¹ On a farm of 1600 acres, belonging to Count De Asarta at Traforeano in Venetia, all the machinery, including the ploughs, is worked by electricity.

international market in all kinds of yarns and textiles, in electrical machinery, in motor-engines and boilers, perhaps in chemicals and furniture. Her rivers will do for her much of what coal has done for England. Her artisans bid fair to be the equal of any. Her splendid harbours, her large seafaring population, her proximity to the Suez Canal, the great market open for her among the Italian populations of South America promise a great commercial expansion. Her manufacturers are doing what they can. It lies with the Government to do the rest—to reduce taxation, to attract capital, to improve and cheapen railway transport. There are observers, who believe that Italy will in the future be more an industrial than an agricultural country. Many of the great towns are growing rapidly, and Milan has a population of 500,000. The whole spirit of the Lombard and Piedmontese and Ligurian towns is industrial, and the new impulse has even touched the South at Bari and in the neighbourhood of Naples. Industrial exports are already worth at least half as much again as those of agricultural origin. But though Lombardy and Piedmont and Liguria and parts of Venetia and Campania and Apulia may become essentially industrial, the great bulk of the country is and will for a long time yet remain agricultural. And Italian agriculture, as we shall see in another chapter, is capable of such indefinite expansion, that it is impossible that Italian manufactures, important as they may become, will rank with it. At all events, as far as it is possible to forecast at present, agriculture will remain the chief source of national wealth.

One of the most vexed economic questions in Italy is, what has been the effect of protection. Cavour did his best to break down the rigid system, which everywhere, except in Tuscany, prevailed under the old despotic Governments, and his policy prevailed long after his death. From 1863 to 1878 Italy had practically free trade. In 1878 mild protective duties were imposed, which continued to the end of 1887. But through the eighties there was a growing cry for more protection from agriculturists suffering from American competition, from manufacturers engaged in languishing industries, from speculators, who knew how a tariff might be manipulated in their own interest, from pseudo-patriots, who pleaded that no good citizen should eat foreign corn, and wanted to see Italy economically independent, especially if it were at the cost of France. The result was the high protectionist tariff of 1887, which imposed, according to the *Giornale degli economisti*, an average duty of over 60 per cent. of value. The new system coincided with the rupture of the French Commercial Treaty, due partly to the political strain between the two countries, partly to the protectionist current, which ran with equal intensity in both. The treaty expired at the beginning of 1888, and the two countries placed differential duties on each other's imports, which remained in Italy till the end of 1889, in France till the end of 1891, after which the ordinary tariffs applied. Both trade and agriculture suffered terribly from the tariff-war. The exports to France dropped at once from £17,000,000 to £6,000,000; the wine trade with

her went down to one-tenth, the silk trade to one-third. The whole loss of trade to the two countries during the rupture has been estimated at £120,000,000; and though to a certain extent trade found other channels, the net result was disastrous. So heavy was the blow, that the reaction began at once, and already in 1891 the Southern agriculturists, repenting the false step, began to agitate for free trade. At that time the feeling in France was too protectionist and too hostile to encourage approaches; but in 1892 commercial treaties were made with Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, which did much to repair the loss of trade with France. It was not till 1898, that negotiations were commenced with France; the new treaty came into force in February 1899, and mutually conceded the most favoured nation clause, except for silk and silk goods. So far its results have been disappointing, for it has led to little or no expansion of trade, in spite of the fact that several French and Italian shipping companies have in the last two years established regular services between Marseilles and Italian ports.

Has Protection helped or hindered Italian industry? There is a widespread feeling among men of all parties that it has given it a great stimulus, and that without it the young manufactures could not have survived. No sufficient materials have been collected to allow of any certain conclusions. Such figures as are available bear out the protectionist contention only to a limited extent. The statistics of imports certainly seem to show that after 1887 native cottons, woollens, iron, and

steel rapidly superseded foreign articles in the home market. But the foreign trade languished between 1887 and 1896 more than in the two previous decades, and the recent expansion is probably due more to the commercial treaties with Germany and Austria and the growing commerce with South America, than to the high tariffs which were imposed ten years before. Silk thread is protected only to a very slight extent, and yet it is one of the most flourishing industries in Italy. On the other hand, the sugar-refining industry languishes, in spite of heavy bounties and the very high duties on foreign sugar, and the only result has been that the consumption of sugar has decreased. On the whole the following conclusions may perhaps be drawn. Protection gave at first a certain stimulus to industry by making it easier to put native goods on the home market. It is, however, only in a minor degree, if at all, responsible for the recent expansion, which is mainly due to increased skill, the development of new markets, the discovery of a cheap form of motor-power, and the general expansion of trade throughout Europe. All the staple industries would have equally survived, had there been no protection. It has given a sickly life to a number of industries, which are not likely to have any permanent stability, and from whose disappearance the country would rather gain than lose. Shipbuilders, with an eye to the bounty, have built for tonnage rather than for carrying efficiency. And Protection has strengthened the evil connection between politicians and speculators, a connection which manipulates tariffs and bounties for purposes of political corruption. It

goes without saying that the consumer has suffered heavily, and the whole purchasing power of the community has diminished. At present there appears to be some reaction towards free trade. The disastrous tariff-war with France has left its memories. The group of men, whose organ is the *Giornale degli economisti*, have long fought a brave battle for it. The Socialists, as a rule, are on the same side. The silk trade favours it. At all events, the keen feeling in favour of commercial treaties goes some way in the direction of free trade, and the new treaty with France has been welcomed generally. Any diminution of the tariff is improbable for some time to come ; but it will continue to be mitigated by commercial treaties, and it is probable that bounties are doomed. An impoverished exchequer may welcome high duties, but grudges paying out for bounties. Already the shipping bounties of 1896 are being cut down materially, though they will still cost the Treasury more than £7,000,000. And recent revelations of fraudulent claims from the steamship companies, and the general complaint of their high rates and defective accommodation, will perhaps prevent any renewal when the Bill now before the Chamber expires. With them, no doubt, will disappear the still less defensible sugar bounties.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PEASANTS

Agriculture. Wheat. Wine. Olives. Lemons and oranges. Dairy and poultry produce. The peasants. Peasant-proprietors. *Mezzaiuoli*. Leaseholders. Improvement tenancies. Farming under bailiffs. The agricultural labourer.

AT all events at present, Italy is in the main agricultural; and more than six out of every ten of the population are occupied on the land. It is naturally not a fertile country. One-tenth of it is barren rock; about a third of it is mountain, and owing partly to the nature of the soil, partly to the destruction of the forests, the mountain is for the most part more or less unproductive. Even the plains have little of the rich alluvial soil of the river basins of North Europe. Much of the most fertile land is at present uninhabitable from malaria. But the accumulated labour of industrious generations has made mountain-side and sandy plain smile with fertility. The patient Italian has built up the terraces of the Riviera, and set them thick with olive and vine; the lemon gardens by the Sorrento coast are literally made by hand out of bare limestone cliff; over three million acres have been laboriously irrigated, and the *marcite* of Lombardy, of no great natural fertility, bear six to nine tons of hay to the acre.

The varying climate and altitude of the country allow a rich diversity of produce. Wheat is still the most important crop, covering nearly one-fifth of the cultivatable area, and exceeding one-third in value of the whole agricultural wealth. The only other important cereal is maize, grown mainly in the North, and only one-third as valuable as the wheat crop. Other cereals—rice, oats, barley, rye—are unimportant; the rice-fields of the Po valley, once of much wider extent, have—happily for the health of the people—shrunk from exhaustion of the soil and unremunerative prices. Hardly inferior in importance to wheat is the vine crop, decreasing in Lombardy and Venetia, where it is making way for cattle-rearing, but advancing in Piedmont and the South and Sicily, and—either by itself or grown with other crops—occupying 8,600,000 acres, or more than a sixth of the cultivated area, especially, of course, in the hill districts. The olive crop, sore stricken in the last two years, ranks in importance after wheat, vines, and maize; it is chiefly a crop of the provinces of Lecce and Bari, though it extends more or less throughout the South and Sicily, and in a less degree to Umbria, Tuscany, and the Riviera. Still more local crops are the mulberries (for silk worms), centring especially in Lombardy, the hemp of Romagna, the lemons and oranges of the South and Sicily, the chestnuts of the hill districts, the fruits—figs, almonds, Japanese medlars, nuts, carobs—almost confined to the South, and grown especially in Campania and Apulia. The production of meat is comparatively unimportant. Cattle are kept more

for purposes of draught than for the market. There is little good natural pasture in Italy. The flocks and herds that roam over the mountain side or through the Maremme are of poor quality, and though cattle of better breeds are fed on the artificial grasses of the irrigated lands, they are kept more for cheese and butter than for meat. There is a considerable and fast-developing industry in poultry-rearing.

Perhaps the most important question of agricultural economics for Italy is how far wheat is to remain the staple product. Its area shows little or no sign of shrinkage, and no country in Europe has so large a proportionate acreage under it. No European country, too, except Russia, shows so low a yield. The average production is $11\frac{1}{2}$ bushels to the acre, or perhaps less, and it is a decreasing one. That of France is $16\frac{1}{2}$ bushels, of Germany 20 to 25 bushels, of Great Britain 30 bushels. The Protectionists claim that wheat cannot be grown at a natural profit, and the existing duty protects the grower to the extent of 13s. 6d. a quarter. Is Protection necessary, and, if it is abandoned, can wheat still be grown? Practical men, viewing the question from a business and not from a parliamentary point of view, say unhesitatingly that it can. Though the yield is diminished in some districts from drought, in others from the practice of growing vines or mulberries among the wheat, the main cause of the low yield is bad cultivation—the want of manure, the want of proper rotation, traditions of careless farming. “It takes too much trouble,” said a large proprietor, “to change the methods which we have been used to for generations ;

but we shall not be ruined, we shall get the corn duty raised." Instances abound where on land of no exceptional excellence, merely by careful culture—by a rotation of crops and the use of artificial manures—the yield has been increased to 30 and 40 and even to more than 50 bushels per acre; the agricultural revival in the Friuli has raised it there from 12 to 22 and sometimes 27 bushels; in a village near Bergamo it has been quadrupled in four years by the introduction of better methods. As a necessary result, the cost of production is much reduced. Signor Solari, the pioneer of agricultural improvement in Italy, has grown it at less than 16s. a quarter, and it has been estimated that with ordinary good cultivation it can be normally produced (allowing for a fair rent) at less than £1. In fact even as it is, if Signor Valenti's figures are correct, it costs only £1. 2s. 8d., exclusive of rent. Now foreign corn has not been imported, free of duty, at a lower cost than £1. 1s. 7d., and its normal cost is about 30s. Wheat, therefore, under good tillage, is independent of any protective tariff, and Protection has its inevitable consequence in encouraging the traditions of bad cultivation, which are the bane of Italian agriculture.

It does not follow, of course, that other crops may not be equally or more remunerative. There can be little doubt that under a better system of manufacture Italian wine has an important future. Italy contains about one-third of the vine area of Europe. From 1887 to 1892, during the ravages of the phylloxera in France, it was the chief wine-producing country, and even now its production ranks only second to that of

France. While the exports of wine from France and Spain are stationary or decreasing, those from Italy tend on the whole to rise. Spain and Italy are, in fact, the only European countries which export more wine than they import. As M. Billot has recently pointed out, France alone in a normal year requires to import £12,000,000 worth; this importation can come for the most part only from Italy and Spain, and though the rate of exchange favours importations from Spain, the two countries are now on the same tariff footing, and Italy should regain much of the French market that she lost in 1888. But if the Italian grower means to gain an assured standing in the European market, he must master two defects. In the first place, he must stamp out the phylloxera and peronospora diseases. The peronospora, which at present is the more widely spread of the two, can be and is to a certain extent being checked by the use of sulphate of copper. The more deadly phylloxera makes slow advance, and has only affected one-tenth of the vine area, or, excluding Sicily, one-fifteenth. But if it is to be checked effectively, probably a large proportion of the vineyards will have to be replanted with American stocks; and though the State nurseries have distributed 30,000,000 stocks, they only supply enough to plant 17,000 acres a year, not a tithe of what is necessary. It is said that through some blunder in its quarantine precautions, the Government itself introduced the disease into Sardinia. It is likely in the future to do less rather than more, and for a sufficient supply of immune stocks the Italian vine-grower will probably have to look to the agricultural

syndicates and travelling schools, that have been springing up so vigorously of late years.¹ But besides protecting themselves from disease, the Italians must improve the character of their wines. There has been much advance here and there in the last few years, and a good deal is already produced of high or even very high quality. But the bulk of it is unfit for export. The fault is not so much in the culture of the vines, which are for the most part of good stocks and carefully grown, as in the manufacture. The farmer likes to make his own wine, and naturally makes it badly. Even in the factories the processes are often antiquated, and there are comparatively few where the best modern methods are practised. It does little good to the merchants of Lecce, that they label their casks as "Bordeaux wine." The wine is generally marketed too soon, national tastes are not consulted, there is little uniformity in the brands; and hence, pure and wholesome and excellent as it often is, the Italian vintage finds a poor reception in the English or German market. The exports, however, in spite of the fall in prices, show a pretty steady tendency to rise, especially to Austria and South America, and have passed the high-water mark of the years before the rupture of the French treaty. In value they are not far short of £3,000,000.

It is remarkable that those Southern products, for which the Italian climate would seem to give special facilities, do not show any great expansion. The olive crop has during the last two years been largely ruined

¹ See below, p. 188.

by the *punteruola* fly, for which, it appears, no adequate remedy has been discovered, though the mischief can be to some extent abated by precautions. But, apart from this perhaps temporary visitation, there are the more radical defects of wasteful harvesting and careless manufacture. Markets have been lost through adulterating with cotton oil. Some of the best Italian oil is too rich and heavy for northern countries, and there seems to be no attempt to convert it into a more marketable article. There is, indeed, a good deal of improvement here and there, but there must be a thorough change of methods, if the oil trade is to develop or even maintain its present position. The value of the exports averages about £2,000,000. The lemon and orange trade (three-quarters of it is in lemons) is very depressed, partly owing to the competition of superior fruit from California, partly because the McKinley tariff has largely shut out the American market. In Calabria lemons fell 50 per cent. and oranges nearly 60 per cent. between 1897 and 1898; at Catania the best oranges fell from £1. 16s. to £1 per thousand; at Gioja Tauro in 1899 lemons sold at 6s. per thousand. Even now, however, the best lemons of the Amalfi district fetch £2 to £4. 12s. per thousand. There are complaints that the extensive use of manures is spoiling the keeping qualities of the fruit, but some of the oranges sent to the English market are of excellent quality, and probably with the more general adoption of better kinds, the elimination of the middleman, and more rapid transit, the trade has an important future. Much more might be done in the secondary products of the

fruit—lemon juice, oils of lemon and bergamot, and citric acid. There is a small but growing trade in lemon juice and citrate of lime and pickled peel, and Italy has a monopoly of essence of bergamot, but the manufacture of citric acid is insignificant. If the protective duties on sugar were abandoned, there would probably be a good opening for the manufacture of marmalade. The fruit and nut and vegetable trade—young potatoes, cauliflowers, tomatoes, apples, almonds, fresh and preserved fruits, dried figs, carob nuts, pistachios—though still rather small, has expanded enormously of late years, and is thriving with the rise of prices. We have seen no satisfactory climatic reason why currants and sultanas should not be grown in the South. An attempt has been made to encourage by bounties and high duties the growth of sugar-beet. But though a certain number of factories have been started, the progress is slow, and the bounties have even less justification than the rest of the protective system. The artificially high price of sugar falls with cruel severity on the consumer, and seriously handicaps the manufacture of wine and preserves.

Perhaps the most promising branches of Italian agriculture are dairy and poultry produce. The exports of cheese, butter, eggs, poultry have doubled or more than doubled in the last ten years. Taken altogether, they are more valuable than the export of wine; the export of eggs alone nearly reaches that of olive oil. With the rapid spread of cooperative dairies,¹ and the greater care now taken in the making of cheese and butter, the

¹ See below, p. 186.

trade in them is likely to become a very important one ; and with each new tunnel through the Alps the trade in eggs is certain to expand. They are said to be the best foreign eggs that reach the English market.

It is very difficult to describe the agricultural classes of Italy, so exceeding great is their diversity. Past differences of government, present differences of climate, have created a corresponding variety. There are no two great classes of farmers and labourers—each class differentiated within itself by only minor distinctions—as in England. Even in the same neighbourhood the widest differences in social conditions may obtain. In food and dress, in education and morality, in social relations, in systems of tenancy, there are too many types to permit of generalisation. There is the French-speaking peasant-proprietor of the Upper Val d'Aosta, where few work for wages and pauperism is unknown, living in his substantial house, well fed with excellent bread and meat and wine, seldom illiterate, a strong Liberal in his politics, a Protestant or free-thinker in his religion. There is the capitalist farmer of the irrigated Lombard plain, often with a capital of from £16 to £20 per acre, a busy, thrifty, shrewd man, of the type of the best English farmer, with little agricultural theory but great practical capacity, a hard employer, who has made a wide social gulf between himself and his men, occasionally well educated, but always tied to his isolated life and narrow sympathies and interests. There is his miserable labourer (still more miserable in Lower Venetia), living on little but

polenta, indifferently housed, underpaid and ill-treated and sometimes cheated by his employer, generally a patient, hard-working, law-abiding drudge—though given to field thefts and occasional drunkenness,—illiterate and often superstitious; but new ideas are reaching even to him, and he begins to be less deferential to the priest, and nurses a vague Socialism, which here and there takes shape in short-lived trade-unions and sporadic strikes; a man who is learning that he has little to thank society for, and would easily become a dangerous element, were it not that Socialism is teaching him to find his salvation in political effort. There is the *mezzaiuolo* farmer of Tuscany or the Marches, leading the even tenor of his mediocre, uneventful life, self-contained, conservative, unemotional, inaccessible to political or religious enthusiasms, sometimes dour and burdened with his lot, sometimes blest with much of the gaiety and brightness of the sunny Italian life; seldom well-to-do, seldom poor, hard-working like all his race, but with small desire to progress, contented with the life his fathers led before him, and ill equipped for the economic struggle of to-day. There are the shepherds of the mountain villages of the Marches, masters of mighty flocks, but living on black bread and water, who only see their homes for a fortnight in the summer, leading a nomad life on the lowlands in the winter, on the uplands in the summer—a rough romantic race, whose favourite book is said to be Tasso's *Gerusalemme*. There are the market-gardeners near Naples and Salerno, growers of lemons and tomatoes and cauliflowers, sober, industrious, making by sheer hard work

their tiny gardens into marvels of fertility, but illiterate and rack-rented, void of social ambition, docile before their landlords with something of canine fidelity and lack of assertion. There are the olive-harvesters of Apulia, who come in gangs—men and women—to live on the great olive farms from November to April, sleeping in barns on sacks and straw, trooping out at early dawn to work till dusk with only half-an-hour for the midday meal, the men living on beans and oil, the women on pounded burnt maize, which they sling on their shoulders in a bag when they go out to work. Last in the scale of civilization comes the Sicilian peasant of the great estates, “treated like a beast” by the landlord or middleman, and repaying him with sullen hate, housed in a windowless, floorless cottage, where human beings and donkeys and pigs share the only room in horrible promiscuity, so poor that he often marries his daughters for bread at twelve or fourteen years, generally malaria-stricken, quite illiterate, steeped in a superstition and brutality of vice, that can hardly find its like in Europe.

There is a corresponding diversity of land-tenure. Italy is not, in the main, a country of peasant-proprietors. It is true that the number of landowners is large and increasing, and is probably not far short of 5,000,000. But the great majority of properties are too small to afford a livelihood. Eight out of nine pay less than 16s. land-tax, which means an annual value of £3 or less. Sometimes a property, only large enough to build a small house on, is owned by fifteen or sixteen co-proprietors. Many, too, of the smaller properties

are owned by men of the middle class, and are let to tenants. Still, there is a population of over 1,300,000 (excluding children under eight) cultivating their own lands, and these figures mean perhaps 400,000 families of peasant-proprietors. As a rule, they are more or less common in the hill districts, most of all in Piedmont, rare on the plains, and, except in North Italy, on the mountains. On the whole, probably their numbers tend to increase. There is a great deal of land-hunger. It is a common complaint that the small proprietor will rather spend his savings in buying fresh fields than in improving those he has already. In some districts, as round Brescia and in the Basilicata, exorbitant sums are given for small plots, and it is general for land to be sold at twenty-five to thirty-three years' purchase. Often, as in Liguria and round Susa and Lecco, there is a keen demand from men who have made a little money abroad and returned to buy a field and build a house in their native village. Near Alba the competition has been so strong, that land doubled in value between 1863 and 1883. The sale of ecclesiastical lands, especially twenty or thirty years ago, flooded the property market with small lots at low prices; and though in the South they seem to have passed almost entirely into the hands of the richer landlords, in parts, at all events, of the North, they have added considerably to the number of peasant-proprietors, and allowed many of the very small owners to increase their holdings to a size sufficient to support a family. On the other hand, the minute properties are probably decreasing, confiscated by the revenue authorities or

sold to pay off debts. The condition of the peasant-proprietors varies very much. Many of those who own a fair-sized farm, at all events in the more fertile districts, are among the most prosperous of the peasants. Others rent land in addition to their own, and rank more properly among the tenant-farmers. But a large number of the smaller holders, unable to support life on their meagre farms, and without capital to rent other land, have for many months of the year to seek precarious employment for wages, and their lot is a harder one than that of the regular labourer.

The bulk of the land is held by small tenant-farmers. The characteristic form of Italian tenure, from the days when the younger Pliny described it much as it is now, is the *colonia parziaria*¹ or *mezzadria*. It is common in the hill districts of the North, more rare on the plain, general throughout Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, and the Marches, scarce in the South, though it occurs in the Abruzzi and here and there in the other provinces. The essence of the *colonia parziaria* is, that it forms a copartnership between landlord and tenant. In its typical form (*mezzadria* proper) the landlord supplies the vines and olives, the tenant supplies the implements, and, except where it is customary for the landlord to provide all or part of them, the cattle. As a rule, though not always, the landlord pays the land-tax and rates, the tenant supplies the labour, and the seed and manure and other current expenses are equally divided. The landlord takes no money rent, and the crops and the profit on the live-

¹ *Colonia parziaria* is sometimes used in a special sense as a synonym of *boaria* (see p. 174).

stock are equally divided between him and the tenant (except the profit on the cattle, where the tenant provides them). In bad seasons the losses are also shared, and there is a customary understanding that the landlord shall always keep the tenant from actual want. But the pure *mezzadria* is now almost confined to the Centre of Italy, and everywhere else the terms of tenancy tend to become more and more onerous to the farmer. Sometimes he has to pay half or all the rates, or a fixed rent in addition to the share of the crops, or do certain work for the landlord without pay. The Sicilian *metatiere* repays two-fold after harvest the seed-wheat advanced him by the middleman. Even in Tuscany he has to supply him with so many eggs and head of poultry. Still more oppressive is the growing practice of demanding more than half the crops, in rare cases as much as four-fifths. The *terzeria* contract, under which the landlord takes two-thirds, is not uncommon, especially in parts of Lombardy and Latium, though sometimes under it the landlord finds all the stock, live and dead. Everywhere the landlord or his agent supervises the farm much more than under an ordinary tenancy. Often, perhaps generally, he determines the cropping of the land, and the agent and tenant go to market together to buy the cattle. The merits and demerits of the system have long been a subject of keen economic controversy in Italy. At present it is being seriously attacked from two quarters. The landlords do not like it, because the minute supervision and the necessity of marketing their share of the produce is irksome ;

because they often get a smaller return than they would, if the land were let for a money rent ; and because they do not like to have their hands tied by the local customs that protect the tenant. In Romagna, at all events, there is a wide tendency for landlords to convert *mezzadria* into simple tenancies, or take the land into their own hands, or make over their rights to middlemen, who treat the *mezzaiuolo* more harshly than they would do themselves. The Socialists, on the other side, attack the system as standing in the way of a better agricultural economy. All small holdings come under their ban ; but they criticize especially the *mezzaiuoli* and the peasant-proprietors, because they are sometimes conservative and slow to adopt improvements, because they grow in the main for home consumption, and therefore divide their farms among too many crops—a little corn, a little grass, a few vines, a few olives, a few beans. It is true that the cost of production is greater and the market value of the produce is less than under a more specialized cultivation. It is questionable, however, whether the economic gain of growing for home consumption does not largely balance the loss arising from these causes. A more radical objection is that the *mezzaiuolo* leans too much on the landlord or agent for direction ; that where the landlord is inert, the tenant is inert also ; that a sound system should be independent of that intelligent direction of the agent, on which the success of the *mezzaiuolo* generally depends at present. He labours, too, under the disadvantages that necessarily attend small culture. How far these disadvantages are compensated by the careful cultiva-

tion of a small holding, how far the conservatism and want of self-reliance and initiative are likely to disappear in the future, are questions that we shall consider later. At present it is sufficient to note that on the whole the *mezzaiuoli*, at all events where the system obtains in its purer form, are the most prosperous and contented section of the Italian peasantry, that their relations with their landlords are generally good, that in the *mezzadria* districts there are comparatively few agricultural labourers and therefore less pauperism and social friction, and that except in Romagna and Lombardy their numbers appear pretty well to hold their own.

Simple tenancies, where the tenant stocks the farm and pays a fixed rent in money or kind, prevail through the greater part of the South and Sicily and in the plain of the Po, besides occurring, as the exception, in almost all parts of Italy. Their numbers are much fewer than those of either *mezzaiuoli* or peasant proprietors, and appear to be decreasing, but, owing to the larger size of the farms, they occupy a considerable portion of the country. Sometimes the tenants hold their farms on leases of from three to twelve or more years, more often probably on an annual tenancy. In the South the rents are often paid in kind, and the landlord stocks the farm, or occasionally, as in the district of Aquila in the Abruzzi, the rent is proportioned to the crop, and thus the system slides imperceptibly into *mezzadria*. The *affittuari* may be roughly subdivided into two widely sundered classes. In, for instance, Campania and the Basili-

cata, and parts of Lombardy and Sicily, they are small farmers or market-gardeners, who cultivate their holdings without hired labour. Often they take a farm planted with vines or fruit-trees, and in such cases pay a high rent, reaching in the orange gardens of the Conca d'Oro to £32 per acre. Their lot is generally a hard one; their rents are high, their leases too short to encourage them to improve, even if they had the capital; they work very hard and fare little better than labourers. They have nothing in common except their tenure with the large capitalist farmers, who rent the big holdings of fruitful Lower Lombardy or the cattle ranches of the Maremme and the Agro Romano or the great wheat and olive farms of Apulia and Sicily. They are prosperous men of business, capable, active, able to take care of themselves. But, except in Lombardy, their rule is marked by low cultivation, and everywhere it is attended by the depression of the labourer. It is on the Lombard plain, in the Agro Romano, on the *latifondi* of Sicily and Apulia, that Italian misery shows in its most hideous form, and the twin plagues of *pellagra* and malaria scourge most the half-starved peasant. The Socialists welcome the extension of large farms, because they mean the advent of the *grande culture* and the creation of an agricultural proletariat, and so hasten the day of "the struggle of classes." But to the more prosaic economist, who seeks a present remedy for present ills, it is a phenomenon full of danger and menace to the State.

In a few localities there are special forms of tenancy which call for notice. In some districts, as in parts

of the province of Rome, farms are let on long leases or in perpetuity ; the latter contract is probably as old as the Greek colonies, and still bears its classic name (*enfiteusi*). Another ancient tenure is that of improvement leases, under which the land is let for a certain period (this under the existing law must not exceed thirty years), during which the tenant binds himself to execute certain improvements. In its original form, as it exists at Velletri and Frosinone, the landlord contributes to the cost of improvements and to the taxes, and his rent varies with the crop. In its more modern form, as it has been introduced during the last thirty years into Apulia and the Basilicata, the landlord contributes nothing, and the tenant gets little or no compensation for his improvements ;¹ the tenant binds himself to plant the farm, generally with vines or olives, which means that he sinks £50 to £100 per acre ; he begins to pay rent after ten years, and if he gets in arrears with it, he forfeits the tenancy and his improvements. Opinions differ as to the value of the system. It certainly seems to operate unfairly to the tenant, and it is said that during the wine crisis of ten years ago many forfeited their farms for non-payment of rent. But it has turned stony wastes into gardens ; and with a legal extension of the duration of the lease and adequate compensation, it is a system which may add greatly to the agricultural wealth of

¹ According to the *Inchiesta agraria* and Professor Nitti (*Economic Review*, July 1893) and the *Parliamentary Commissioni per i contratti agrari*, no compensation is given ; but from inquiries made on the spot, we find that, at all events under some improvement leases, compensation is given for one quarter of the value of the improvements.

Italy. Signor Gatti quotes an instance of a commune near Modena, where 230 acres of communal woodland were divided into 111 lots, and let at low rents for twenty-nine years to the poorest families of the commune. So great has the benefit been, that while the rent to the commune has increased eight-fold, it has provided work for almost all the unemployed of the district, and stopped emigration. An allied and altogether admirable tenure is that of the *terrene censuite*, as it exists near Massafro in Apulia. Rough land is broken up by the landlords and let to small proprietors with fixity of rent and tenure; the tenancy is forfeited only if rent is three years in arrears, and in that case the landlord must compensate for improvements.

There is a rather marked tendency for landlords to take land into their own hands and farm it under bailiffs (*economia*). It is an old and widespread practice in Italy, and it has probably grown of recent years. The landlord often finds it pay better, and, when he is a business-like man, he can introduce improvements more easily than if he has to persuade a *mezzaiuolo* with all his class' suspicion of innovations. Sometimes, no doubt, both *mezzaiuolo* and landlord gain by the change, the former earning as labourer a good fixed wage, which, at all events, exceeds his old income in a bad season. It is a very common practice for landlords cultivating their own estates to pay their labourers under a system which has its affinities to *mezzadria*, and sometimes slides into it (*boaria*). In its usual form the labourer is given a certain portion of

the farm to cultivate. He has his house and garden free, certain perquisites, and generally a small monthly wage. But his chief source of income is a proportion of the crops. Sometimes, perhaps, the material position of the *boaro* is superior to that of the *mez-zaiuolo*. But as a rule it is not; and whether the labourer has a share in the crops or not, the bailiff system, even though it may lead occasionally to increased production, has its obvious drawbacks. On every social ground it is inferior to one, in which capital is more distributed and the landlord's power less absolute. Often the labourer is as grievously depressed under the bailiff's rule as under that of the large capitalist farmer.

Everywhere, however, the position of the agricultural labourer is one of more or less dangerous inferiority. It is true that wages have on the whole risen a little, that food and clothes are cheaper, that the labourer is often his own landlord, and, if in regular employment, frequently occupies an allotment on his master's farm or has a share in the produce of one. It is true, too, that, at all events in the small-farm districts, there is not the same fixed line between him and the farmer class that there is in most parts of England. Especially among the hills, there is a constant movement from one class to another; there is little difference of food and clothes, little social friction between farmer and regular labourer. But everywhere the life of the casual labourer is a cruel struggle for existence, and in the large-farm districts there are few labourers, of any

class, who rise above the level of abject poverty. Their wages, low enough at the best, are interrupted by bad weather or want of work, are often partly paid in bad and *pellagra*-breeding maize, charged to them above its real value. Their food is insufficient, their houses disgrace a civilized country. In parts of Sicily and the South they work at long distances from their homes, and see their families once a week or even seldomer. In the rice-fields of Pavia they and their wives work long hours in the hottest days of July, up to their knees in water, breathing an air rife with fever germs. In the Agro Romano, almost at the gates of Rome, they sleep in caves or windowless, doorless huts of straw, that recall to Italians the savage villages of Erythræa, their only food polenta or maize bread or carrion meat, the helpless, malaria-stricken serfs of the ganger, who flogs their children, robs them of their food, and often sends them back to their home in the Abruzzi without a franc of wages after the long autumn's work. Little wonder that bad food and malaria make the labourer of the plains old in middle age. Little wonder that he drinks and steals, that he pays his employer with a sullen hatred that may easily become explosive. And, in spite of emigration, their numbers are steadily growing. It is probable that they are now more numerous than all the other peasant classes combined. At present they are almost passive, hopeless of bettering their lot except by emigration. The Italians will be wise, if they make their fate more tolerable before they learn to resent its cruel injustice and come to feel their own strength.

CHAPTER IX

THE AGRICULTURAL REVIVAL

The awakening of the peasants. Remedies against malaria, drought, hail. Land-law reform. The State and Agriculture. Village Banks. Agricultural Syndicates. Cooperative dairies. Travelling schools. Cooperation at Bergamo, Parma, elsewhere.

It may seem extravagant to talk of a revival in the present pass of Italian agriculture. When the income of a poor farmer or regular labourer's family seldom ranges beyond £25 a year, when the exhausted land produces less than half a crop of wheat, when through large districts the barest elements of modern agriculture are unknown, when a vicious land-system and dearth of capital half strangle progress, it is hard at first to believe that there is any dawn of better things. And yet there is a revival, almost as notable as that which has awakened the country's industry to new life. Conscription, emigration, increasing intercourse with the towns, have broken up the old benumbing apathy of the peasant. His standard of comfort has risen; his clothes and furniture are better; shoes are worn by all, where shoes were unknown forty years ago; the women wear hats and earrings, and ape the fashions of the town; tobacco takes the place of snuff, and almost every peasant has his occasional luxury at café or tavern. Methods of agriculture steadily im-

prove. Even at the time of the *Inchiesta agraria* eighteen years ago, the improved stock and implements, the better rotation of crops, the increased use of manure, were making themselves felt, and since then the advance has been much more rapid.

Italian agriculture has more than its share of troubles—physical difficulties in malaria and drought and hail, social difficulties in burdensome taxation, in a defective land-system, in want of capital, above all in bad traditions of cultivation. Malaria slays its 20,000 victims every year, and keeps desolate huge tracts of the richest land in Italy. Two millions at least of the population, it is estimated, are more or less afflicted by its visitation. Drought scourges large districts in the South. A hailstorm may wreck the crops of a province, and so great is the danger, that the Hail Insurance Societies sometimes charge for tobacco crops a premium of 14 per cent., and £1 per acre for vines. Fortunately, malaria, hail, drought—all have their remedy. The genesis of malaria is now sufficiently established. The germs are known to be communicated by the bite of a weak-flying species of *Anopheles* mosquito,¹ whose larvæ live in stagnant pools, and which only flies at night. It can be extirpated by depriving it of breeding-places, or by the destruction of its larvæ; or, since the alternate generations of the germs can only exist in a human host, it can be rendered innocuous from their wholesale destruction, either by the use of quinine, or by pro-

¹ For recent investigations on the matter, see Lord Lister's address to the Royal Society of Nov. 30, 1900 (reported in *Nature*, Dec. 6, 1900).

tecting human beings for a sufficient length of time from its bite. That the drainage of malarious land checked the disease was of course recognized long before its scientific explanation was discovered. A good deal has been done towards this since 1860. Over 1,700,000 acres have been reclaimed with varied skill and success, or are now in process of reclamation. The most extensive works, which are carried out at the joint expense of the State, the local bodies, and the proprietors, are in the lower Po valley and Campania. But much remains to be done, and another 1,000,000 acres at least wait to be reclaimed. There are desert tracts in the Basilicata, where was once the home of Greek civilization, now purchasable at £2 to £5 the acre, which, if reclaimed and planted with lemons or fruit, would be worth from £60 to £70. The 330,000 acres of the Pontine Marshes have been almost forgotten, in spite of the great works begun by Pius VI. a century ago. The defective and ill-drawn law of 1883 for the reclamation of the Agro Romano has had a very qualified success, for some of the great Roman nobles, who own most of the land, have no enterprise or public spirit to carry out their share of the improvements, though the soil is capable of bearing large crops, and in one case has been worked with success by some Lombard men of business. Pending the destruction of the malarial mosquito by drainage, or possibly by poisoning its larvæ, it can, as we have seen, be made innocuous. Some remarkable experiments made last year by Professor Grassi (a medallist of our Royal Society) on the coast

near Salerno prove that in the most malarious districts men can live in health, if their houses are protected at night by thin wire gauze, which excludes the mosquito. He asks that the protection shall be made compulsory for five years on the whole malarious coast below Naples, by which time he hopes that the germs will become extinct in that district. A private Bill, somewhat to this effect, has been laid before the Chamber.

Drought, like malaria, is largely remediable. There are still 3,500,000 more acres capable of irrigation. But the radical cure is afforestation. The destruction of the forests, that began with the French rule and has hardly ceased to-day, has seriously modified the Italian climate, both intensifying drought and increasing the violence of the storms. Wide districts have been submerged under a dreary sea of mud by the fierce storm-fed mountain torrents. The new kingdom has done little to remedy the evil. It has even allowed 50,000 acres of wood to be cut down on the expropriated Church Lands. On the other hand, some 130,000 acres have been planted, and 6½ millions of young trees are distributed annually from the forestry school at Vallombrosa. An admirable regulation appoints for every school an annual *festa degli alberi*, when the children picnic in the woodland and plant trees. But it would be more to the purpose if the State, as in France, exempted reafforested land from taxation for twenty years. The hailstorms, meanwhile, with their fearful havoc among the vine crops, seem to be brought under human control. Within the last three years Herr Stiger's experiments of discharging cannon loaded with a special

pyrite powder at an advancing hail-cloud have been extensively practised in Northern Italy, and with satisfactory results. Whatever may be the scientific explanation, it seems fairly well established that the discharge almost invariably brings down the hail in the form of fine snow.¹ It has been proposed to make the establishment of stations of these *cannoni grandinifughi* compulsory.

Thus science has found a cure for the physical enemies of Italian agriculture, and if the State does its duty, malaria ought in another generation to be a thing of the past, and the destruction wrought by drought and hail will be largely abated. If, however, it means to apply the remedies, it will have to show a resolve very different from the apathy with which it has handled the social and political obstructions that bar agricultural progress. Here we find that, where the remedy lies with Parliament, little or nothing has been done; where it lies with the people themselves, the progress has been great. Taxation still frightens capital and crushes the farmer with its appalling incidence. The cry for land reform has long been loud, but is still unanswered; there is an urgent need to compensate the farmer for his improvements, to give him security against an unfair rise of rent, to abolish the middleman, to make the payment of wages in kind illegal, perhaps to establish fair-rent courts. Some reformers, with questionable wisdom, call for more heroic legislation, for the compulsory letting of

¹ Particulars may be found in Foreign Office Reports, *Trade of Southern Italy for 1900*, pp. 9-10.

large properties on long leases, for the application of the *mezzadria* contract to all tenancies. In 1894 Crispi introduced a Bill for Sicily, which would have enforced the letting of communal and charitable estates on perpetual leases, and compelled private landlords either to do the same or let their land in lots of from 12½ to 50 acres, and carry out such improvements on them as were recommended by a Land Commission, the State advancing them public money for the purpose at 3 per cent. But the same Conservative influences, that persuaded him to withdraw his Bill, have made all other proposals of land-law reform stop short at the pious hopes of Parliamentary Commissions. Even when Parliament has meant well, something seems to have struck its efforts with sterility. The subsidized Agricultural Committees (*Comizi agrari*), founded in 1866 and revived with much parade in 1883, have had to transform themselves or die of anæmia. Most of the agricultural schools are admitted failures; the forestry school at Vallombrosa boasts twelve teachers to thirty-six students. Schemes to encourage tobacco culture have been spoilt, because the State imposes exorbitant taxes and takes the produce at an unremunerative price. The attempt to divert capital to agriculture by facilitating advances on mortgage from the great banks (*credito fondiario*) has probably done more harm than good, for the small proprietors have found the legal expenses too heavy, and the large landlords have borrowed more to keep up their personal extravagance or buy new estates than to improve those they have already.

But while Parliament has faltered and blundered, the Italian agriculturists are working out their own salvation. There is little progress in the South, but in the North the shortcomings of Parliament have only stimulated self-help. A very remarkable movement has arisen of late years, taking shape in various forms of cooperative activity, which promises to redeem the Italian peasant from his indigence. His first need is to obtain capital on easy terms. Till recently, if he wanted to add to his stock, or plant vines or mulberries, or buy new implements or seed or chemical manures, the small farmer, who always lives from hand to mouth, has had to borrow at an interest of from 4 to 12 per cent. per month. Under such conditions any general improvement was of course impossible. We have seen how Government failed to meet the need. Some of the larger Savings Banks and People's Banks offered easy loans to agriculturists,¹ but as a rule they required better security than the small farmer could give; and though they have lent a considerable amount to the proprietors and larger farmers, they have only here and there reached the peasant. It needed something more popular in its constitution, more adapted to the means of the small man; and the want has been met by the development of Village Banks (*casse rurali*). They owe themselves to Dr. Wollemborg, now a Deputy of the Constitutional Left,² who, copying in the main the German Raffeisen banks, founded the first in a Lombard village in 1883. Nine years later,

¹ See below, p. 201.

² And (Feb. 1901) a member of the Zanardelli Cabinet.

when there were already more than sixty of them, the Catholic Congress¹ started a vigorous propagandism in their favour, and since then they have spread with marvellous rapidity. There are now over 800 Catholic and at least 125 unsectarian Village Banks. They are humble institutions, each confined to its own village, with a membership usually between twelve and fifty, seldom with a capital of more than £300 or £400, lending little sums (averaging £8), as a rule for three or six months, to the small farmers and peasant-proprietors, who are the majority of their members. But their very humility is the secret of their usefulness. Their working expenses are very low; they exactly meet the wants of the little farmer; and so prudent is their management, that their losses hardly exceed .05 per cent. of their loans. Through a large part of Lombardy and Venetia and Piedmont they have banished the usurer. Exact statistics of their operations are not forthcoming, but two years ago they had a membership of about 19,000, and the Catholic Congress estimated at the same date that its young banks alone had advanced £280,000. In 1897 seventy-three banks in Piedmont lent £50,000, and had deposits exceeding £48,000.

A work as valuable is being done by the 192 societies (*Consorti agrari*), which, under various names and constitutions, supply their 45,000 members with seed and implements and manures at as near as possible to cost price. They are all of quite recent growth

¹ See above, p. 57.

² The largest *Cassa rurale* that we have particulars of, that of Caluso in Piedmont, had, in 1897, 459 members, £5000 deposits, and lent over £18,000 in the year.

and are more or less based on the French Agricultural Syndicates, and often take their name (*Sindicati*); with the exception of a few of the *Comizi agrari*, which have copied their younger rivals to save themselves from sterility, they are private associations, on a more or less cooperative footing, and, except to an infinitesimal extent, independent of State encouragement and support. Their chief business is to supply chemical manures, which are always carefully analyzed, and they have succeeded in reducing their prices from 20 to 50 per cent. Sometimes they allow credit, and are said to have done so absolutely without loss. Probably they appeal to the middling rather than to the very small farmer, but, so far as figures go, they are of even greater importance than the Village Banks. One of the Milanese societies did a business of nearly £36,000 in 1898; the Agricultural Association of Friuli came hardly behind with £30,000. Altogether they sold £760,000 worth of stuff in 1899. Some of them are developing their activities in various directions. They keep high-class bulls and rams, or lend out model implements; they have done much to encourage cooperative dairies and agricultural education; they agitate for a reduction of railway rates; in Venetia they supply good maize as a protection against *pellagra*. Here and there they have made a few essays towards the cooperative sale of farm produce. Their Federation, which has three works for manufacturing chemical manures, sends samples to every parish priest, and affixes in the railway stations tables showing the relative value of fertilizers. So important is their work

felt to be, that Signor Maggiorino Ferraris has recently proposed that federated "Agricultural Unions" on very similar lines should be established by the State in every district, and that all rural proprietors should be deemed to be at least nominal members. His scheme amounts to a huge national cooperative society, embracing all agriculturists and supplying most of their needs. It would sell them manures and seed, implements and cattle, and work in close cooperation with the travelling teachers of agriculture.¹ It would provide for agricultural education. It would promote the cooperative manufacture of wine and butter and cheese and olive oil. One branch of its work would be a great bank for agricultural loans at 4 per cent., for which every rural post-office would act as an agency; and Signor Ferraris asks that the deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank, amounting to £2,000,000 a year, should form part of its capital. He hopes that the private Savings Banks and People's Banks would advance an equal amount, and that thus £4,000,000 a year will be put at the disposal of agriculture. It is a gigantic and attractive scheme; but in spite of what has been done in Prussia, it is extremely doubtful whether any scheme of the kind is desirable or possible in Italy. If the *Consorti* remain voluntary associations as now, they are more likely to run in wholesome channels, than if they are taken under the State's paralyzing protection.

The cooperative manipulation, on whose importance Signor Ferraris insists, has already a considerable development. The Italians, like the Danes and Irish,

¹ See below, p. 188.

are revolutionizing their production of butter and cheese by means of cooperative dairies (*latterie sociali*). They began, thanks to the initiative of a local priest, in 1872, among the subalpine villages near Agordo in the province of Belluno, and since then they have spread, with some slight assistance from Government, to many parts of Venetia and Lombardy and Piedmont, and even to the Basilicata. Two hundred of the great cheese farmers of Lodi, with a daily production of 13,000 gallons of milk a day, have founded a great cheese factory. There are now 400 or 500 cooperative dairies.¹ The little farmer with his one or two cows, which formerly brought him small profit, now sells excellent butter made with the best modern appliances; and in many a poor household, we are told, there is £40 a year coming from the sales, where previously there had been little or nothing. In some districts they have federated for the sale of their produce, sending large quantities by parcels-post even to Spain and Egypt, and selling at an average price of rather more than 1s. the lb. The Agordo Federation retains the premier post. The small mountain holders there, few of whom possess more than two cows, have built up a great organization, with thirty-five or more affiliated dairies, with its large factories costing £4000 apiece, which take over four million gallons of milk a year, paying the members 43 per cent. above the previous price, and making 120,000 lbs. of butter. It has taken over a large nursery of apples and pears with the object of distributing the best kinds

¹ A good many of the Piedmontese *latterie sociali* are cooperative for the manufacture of butter and cheese, but not for their sale.

of trees, and with the ultimate intention of organizing the cooperative sale of fruit. In other directions cooperative manipulation of agricultural produce has not made much progress. It has not yet, so far as we know, been introduced in the manufacture of olive oil or in the treatment of silkworms. There appear to be a certain number of cooperative wine-factories (*cantine sociali*), for instance at Oleggio and among the small wine-growers of the Monferrato, but we have failed to obtain many particulars of their working. In two communes of the Monferrato, where the little proprietors set up wine-factories with the aid of some apparatus given by the Government, the value of their grapes is said to have more than doubled.

Side by side with this network of Village Banks and Agricultural Syndicates and Cooperative Dairies there has been a corresponding development of agricultural education. While the higher agricultural schools of the State languish for want of pupils, and its whole scheme is too theoretic to have much value, the Travelling Schools (*cattedre ambulanti*), subsidized to some extent by Government, but founded by private initiative and chiefly supported by the Provincial Councils and private Savings Banks, are bringing a very practical kind of teaching to the peasant's door. Entirely the creation of the last ten years, they number thirty-nine, chiefly in the North, but including a few in the Centre and South. The duties of the travelling teacher are multi-form. He gives fifty or sixty lectures in the year in different centres; he has practical demonstrations; he supervises experimental plots; he sits in his office every

market-day for oral consultation; he has classes in special subjects, such as grafting and pruning; he trains elementary teachers to lecture in their turn on agricultural subjects; sometimes he publishes an agricultural journal; he keeps an outlook for phylloxera and superintends the measures to stamp it out, if it appears; sometimes he has nurseries to supply American vine-stocks, or introduces bulls and rams of improved breeds; he organizes fruit shows; he introduces, where he finds it possible, Village Banks and Cooperative Dairies, or preaches the advantages of joining the local Syndicate. It is a work, that probably has no parallel either in France or England, and its practical usefulness is matched by its popularity. The cost of each "chair" varies between £184 and £750.

How excellently these various activities complement one another may be seen by surveying their work in two of the districts where they are best developed, and where they are revolutionizing the agriculture. Eight years ago the Diocesan Committee of the Catholics of Bergamo was moved by Professor Rezzara to take in hand the Village Bank movement. A small popular bank was started to provide the capital, and by its assistance the Committee had after four years sixty Village Banks at work, with nearly 4000 members and net assets amounting to £10,000. In the short period they had made 7600 loans, amounting to £67,000, and had no single loss from failure to repay. The banks are now federated, and their working is carefully watched by the central organization. A variety of cooperative activities have clustered round

them. A Catholic Agricultural Union (in imitation of the Syndicates) supplies £10,000 annually of manures and seeds to its members. There is a cooperative dairy, a cooperative bakery and flour-mill. Ten thousand head of stock are insured in the small village insurance societies, and though their finances are primitive, they seem to be fairly successful. There are a number of small friendly societies, which lead a rather anæmic life. A farm-school, local lectures, evening schools, experimental plots, provide for agricultural education. An equally fine organization is being built up in the province of Parma at the instance of Signor Guerici, a Radical Deputy. Here everything originates from the local Savings Bank and pivots round the agricultural instructor, Signor Bizzozero, who has made his travelling school the leading one of Italy, and earned himself among the peasants the name of *il santo della cooperazione*. Founded eight years ago, it is changing the whole agricultural system of the province. One of its earliest results was the foundation of a *Consorzio agrario*, which in its seventh year was doing a business of about £40,000, and boasts that it saves the farmers of the province £8000 a year on their manures. To a large extent the *Consorzio* does the work of Village Banks, but there is a small group of these, which have developed a type of their own. These *casse agrarie* are not self-managing like the *casse rurali*, nor are they financed by a well-to-do patron, as the latter are said sometimes to be. They are strictly dependent on the local Savings Bank, which supplies

their capital at 4 per cent., and through Signor Bizzozero carefully overlooks them. Thus Travelling Chair and Syndicate and Village Banks are carefully coordinated and mutually supplement each other.

Most of this wonderful growth of cooperation and education is the work of the last ten years, and though it has hardly penetrated the greater part of rural Italy, already it is lifting the peasant in some districts from indigence to comparative prosperity. There the usurer has vanished, the land has immensely increased its productiveness, the whole system of agriculture is revolutionized. In a commune of the province of Bergamo, so tells the worthy priest to whom its revival is due, the yield of wheat has quadrupled in four years, and not only is there work for men from other villages, but emigrants, whom poverty had driven away, are returning to an Italian village, where life is easier than across the Atlantic. A Parmesan parish, which fifteen years ago was mostly rough woodland, where wandered hungry sheep, is sprinkled now with fruitful vineyards. Among the small peasant properties of Pieve di Soligo the value of land has nearly doubled, and the taxes, once generally in arrears, are punctually paid. In a little mountain village of Friuli the peasants have twice as many cows as they possessed before they started a cooperative dairy. The owners of tiny farms at Gavardo near the Lago di Garda put their small savings together to engage an expert to teach them scientific agriculture; they bought improved machines for common use and planted a nursery of better vine-stocks; and in consequence their whole

economic position has been raised. These instances are but typical of the change that is going on. The small proprietors and small farmers are not going to disappear for all the prophecies of Socialists. Landlords in Sicily and elsewhere are finding it profitable to break up their large farms into small holdings; an estate near Perugia has increased its value seven-fold by the introduction of small *mezzadria* farms. Schemes of "home colonization" are in the air, to populate reclaimed land and the half-cultivated estates of charitable foundations and the State. There is a danger in any artificial creation of peasant holdings, and the Italians will probably be wise if they tread that way with caution. But, at all events where the small farmer exists already, a new era seems dawning for him. The "small property in isolation" is becoming the "small property in association," and the little farmer, who buys his manure and implements through his Syndicate, who gets his capital from his Village Bank, who sends his milk to a cooperative dairy, and his grapes to a cooperative wine-factory, who associates with his neighbours to irrigate his land and keep his crops and stock free from disease, has most of the advantages both of the large and the small farm. While the State has neglected him, the Italian peasant has been working out his own salvation, and the agricultural crisis is leaving him, as in France, strong to stand on his own feet, and winning the success that his patient toil and hardy initiative deserve.

CHAPTER X

COOPERATION

Cooperation in Italy. Its present strength. Savings Banks and People's Banks. Post Office Savings Bank. Distributive Cooperation. Productive Cooperation. Cooperative Labour Societies. Friendly Societies. Trade Unions. Chambers of Labour.

THE cooperative movement is young in Italy, but it is very full of life and growth. In mere figures, indeed, it shows small beside the fellow movement in England, though Italian Savings Banks (which must rank there as a form of cooperation) are probably unrivalled, and we have nothing corresponding to their People's Banks. But, at all events in mobility and capacity of development, and in the ingenuity and absence of rivalry with which its different lines of advance are coordinated, Italian cooperation outruns our own. There are several marked points of contrast. In Italy the various forms of cooperation are less specialized than with us. To a certain extent People's Banks and Savings Banks, Cooperative Societies and Friendly Societies cover the same ground. As a rule, People's Banks and Savings Banks are hardly distinguishable in their operations; the People's Banks take savings deposits, the Savings Banks do a large business in loans and discounts. Friendly Societies sometimes lend small sums on precisely the same conditions as do many of the Savings Banks and People's Banks. The banks largely finance the Agricultural Syndicates and Friendly Societies. The Friendly Societies often

have cooperative stores attached to them. They and the Cooperative Societies sometimes constitute informal Trade Unions. Each kind of organization gives assistance to productive cooperative societies; the People's Bank at Imola advanced them £20,000 in five years, the Savings Bank at Ravenna advanced over £30,000 in ten years. There is sometimes, no doubt, a little overlapping; but there is an absence of jealousy and a strong common desire to assist one another, that make the Cooperative and Thrift movement a very powerful and united whole.

Its adaptability is equally notable. There are no hard and fast lines. The best of the banks and societies are always on the look-out for local needs and ready to meet them. The Savings Banks give princely donations to charity and public purposes. The Savings Bank at Vercelli gives a premium of £4000 to every textile mill started in the neighbourhood that employs 500 hands. That of Milan has a warehouse, where silk goods are stored to an annual value of £3,000,000, and makes advances on their value, thus enabling spinners to hold back for a favourable market. That of Venice gives premiums for the construction of sanitary workmen's dwellings; others make loans at low rates for the same purpose. The Savings Bank at Bologna has lent considerable sums for agricultural improvement, has bought mountain land to be re-afforested, has helped to plant a nursery of American vine-stocks. The People's Bank at Padua gives £270 a year in scholarships. The large cooperative banks have formed a Life Insurance Society, in which some

of them insure their employees, and which has issued policies to the value of nearly £900,000. Without their assistance the great machinery of Agricultural Syndicates and Village Banks and agricultural teaching could never have grown up.

Another distinguishing mark is their decentralization. There is more independence of the State than in France or England. The Italian Post Office Savings Bank does a small business in comparison with that of the voluntary societies. Owing largely to the imperfections of the Italian law, only a limited number of Cooperative and Friendly Societies and Village Banks have registered themselves. Application for registration has to be made to the local court of justice, and the vagueness of the law has allowed prejudiced judges to insist on the insertion of unreasonable rules, or refuse registration on arbitrary grounds. But the decentralization goes further than this. There is little formal combination among the local societies. The attempts to form a wholesale Cooperative Store or a central agency for People's Banks (with or without the Friendly and Cooperative Societies) have failed. There are no large Friendly Societies, hardly any amalgamated Trade Unions, but a multitude of small societies, confined to a single district or a single trade in that district. The town of Parma alone, with a population of 50,000, has twenty-five Friendly Societies. It is very rarely that any of them act outside a limited area. Even the great Milanese Savings Bank has not advanced beyond Lombardy. One or two cooperative banks administer the *credito fondiario* over a considerable

portion of the country. But with this exception, the Central Catholic Bank at Parma and the Federation of Agricultural Syndicates are the only cooperative institutions that operate beyond the limits of one of the great divisions of the country. There are, indeed, national congresses of People's Banks and Co-operative Societies, and common agencies for propagandist or defensive purposes ; but there is no financial centralization. The system has its weaknesses perhaps, but it corresponds to the strong local sentiment of the country, and it more than compensates for any drawbacks by its freshness and spontaneity and local usefulness.

Before 1863 there was nothing of this great movement, except a few more or less anæmic Friendly Societies and Savings Banks and a handful of Co-operative Societies. In 1860 there were probably not more than 300 Friendly Societies ; there were a few weak Savings Banks in Lombardy, and here and there a cooperative store. But there were no People's Banks, no Village Banks, no Cooperative Labour Societies, only one society for cooperative production. In 1863, in the early days of United Italy, among the hopes and enthusiasms that came in with its birth, Signor Luzzatti preached a crusade to introduce the People's Banks that Schultze had sown broadcast through Germany. In 1864 the first People's Bank was founded at Lodi, and since then, save for the mushroom growth of unsound banks in the South during the fever of speculation in the early eighties, the movement has been one of steady and healthy growth. Their figures have an imposing magnitude. At the end of 1898 there were 594 banks

with 381,000 members, with a capital and reserve fund of over £4,000,000, a business in the year of £33,000,000, and over £270,000 of profits. One bank alone, the *Banca popolare* of Milan, did in 1900 a business of £4,330,000. The Savings Banks have grown even more rapidly. At the end of 1899 they numbered 404, with 1,630,000 depositors, over £57,000,000 in deposits, and a capital fund of about £8,000,000, while the Post Office Savings Bank, founded in 1876, has 3,664,000 depositors and £25,000,000 deposits. The great Milanese *Cassa di risparmio*, with its 118 branches scattered through Lombardy, the premier savings bank of Italy and probably of the world, has 575,000 depositors, £23,900,000 deposits, and nearly £17,000,000 invested in public securities. That of Bologna has £1,540,000 in deposits, that of Padua £854,000, that of Piacenza £820,000, that of Parma £690,000. The savings invested in Savings Banks, People's Banks, and Post Office Bank amount in all to £100,000,000, or £3. 2s. 6d. per head of population. Meanwhile the Friendly Societies have grown yet more in numbers, though their finances are comparatively humble. There are no later statistics than 1894, but it is probable that there are 8000 of them, with 1,000,000 members and £4,000,000 of funds. There are over 900 Village Banks, about 1260 cooperative stores, at least 100 productive societies, over 500 Cooperative Labour Societies, 400 or 500 Cooperative Dairies, nearly 200 Agricultural Syndicates. It is a mighty agency for good, and if United Italy had created nought else, it were worth the struggle to attain it.

There is so much similarity between the Savings Banks and People's Banks, that they may be treated as a whole. There are, indeed, certain points of difference. The People's Banks are on a more democratic basis, the committee of management being elected by the shareholders, while in the Savings Banks they are nominated by the local Councils or other public bodies. The People's Banks employ the greater part of their capital in bill-discounting and other banking operations, mainly among their own members; the Savings Banks, as a rule, invest most of their funds in securities and mortgages, and devote only a minor portion to banking business. The Savings Banks, outside their capital funds (which come mainly from endowments), obtain most of their money from deposits; the People's Banks have, in addition to deposits, a share capital, and get a large proportion of their working capital from current accounts. But both alike are based on the broad principles, that, while in a larger or smaller degree they engage in ordinary banking operations, they are banks conducted, not for private profit, but for public benefit; that they take small savings,¹ and employ their profits either in the interest of small shareholders or in works of public utility. They are alike, too, in the great skill with which their business is generally done. In 1899 the Savings Banks had losses of £1200 only

¹ Interest on deposits is, as a rule, 3 per cent., but in some of the banks it has been recently reduced to 2½, and in at least one case to 2¼ per cent. There is often a special class of deposits for working men and women, which bear a higher rate of interest. The more popular form of deposit is to make it the property of the owner for the time being of the deposit book (*libretti al portatore*); it is less often invested in the name of a particular person (*libretti nominativi*).

as against profits of £171,000; in 1898 the People's Banks had profits exceeding £280,000 and losses of £7000. The Milan People's Bank has lost on its loan and discount business only .027 per cent. of its advances; the Parma Savings Bank, which employs a large part of its capital in bill-discounting, has lost less than .005 per cent. In the financial crisis of 1889 to 1893, while the private banks were in painful straits, deposits poured into the coffers of the Savings Banks and the best People's Banks. And the public confidence in them is proved by the fact that the Government has made some of them its agents in administering the *credito fondiario* and the Old Age Pension Fund.¹ It is true, on the other hand, that the unsound banks in the South collapsed in 1889, and gave their quatum to the bankruptcy and misery that followed. But since then the movement has gone back to its first and healthier lines; and though there are occasional complaints that some of the larger People's Banks are slow and old-fashioned in their methods, and that their shareholders do not interest themselves sufficiently in the management, it is probable that the great majority both of People's Banks and Savings Banks are admirably directed.

Banks, worked on these principles, are studded over the whole of Northern Italy (though to a less degree in Piedmont) and parts of the Centre and South, bringing easy credit within the reach of men whom the private banks neglected and distrusted—the great lower-middle class of small manufacturers and tradesmen—taking charge of their savings, and diverting them into

¹ See above, p. 182, and below, p. 218.

productive channels, often giving generous assistance by loans to Productive Cooperative Societies, Village Banks, Cooperative Dairies, which could not have come into life without their help. But it is often charged against them, that they neither aid the small farmer nor the artisan, that they have become capitalistic in their character, seeking big dividends, charging too high rates for their discounts, glad rather than otherwise that the working man does not come to their doors. There is some truth in the charge, but it requires very considerable qualification. Figures prove that the banks cater to a large extent to the small peasant, and even in some degree to the artisan and labourer. The shares in the People's Banks are generally as low as from 4s. to £1; the average holding is under £8, and tends to decrease. Twenty-four per cent. of their shareholders are small tradesmen, and 9 per cent. are artisans. The *Banca popolare di credito* of Bologna, out of 4967 shareholders, has 933 small proprietors or farmers and 278 working men. The average deposits in the Savings Banks are rather high, but at Parma half are under £4, and the bank has a special class of 5000 small deposits which average £1. 8s. At the Imola Savings Bank half the deposits are under £2, and its special class, confined to the poorer working classes, has 2070 depositors, with an average deposit of £1. 7s., to which the bank adds a small yearly bonus. At the Cremona People's Bank one-third of the deposits are less than £4; at the *Banca cooperativa per gli operai* at Bologna the average of all deposits is under £6. The Savings

Bank at Bologna has insured over 4000, chiefly working men and servants, for old age pensions, and adds a bonus of about 10s. a year to each. So, too, the mass of loans and discounts is for small sums; in the People's Banks the average is for £15, and tends to decrease, and a large proportion are for much smaller amounts. At the Milan *Banca popolare* one-seventh of the discounts are for sums under £8; the People's Bank of Padua has lent £120,000 to working men; the *Banca popolare di credito* at Bologna makes 23 per cent. of its advances to them; at the *Banca cooperativa per gli operai* at the same place the loans and discounts average a little over £5, and the bank has dealings with most of the working families in the city. At the Piacenza Savings Bank two-thirds of the discounts are for sums under £8; at the Parma Savings Bank the average is £20, and very few exceed £40. At all events, as regards the peasant, the charge of neglect has slender foundation. It is probable that the banks do not reach the very poorest, but they do reach a large mass of small proprietors and small farmers. A quarter of the members of the People's Banks come from this class, and over 4 per cent. are agricultural labourers. In the agricultural districts, as in the federated banks of Pieve di Soligo, more than half the members are small peasants. The *Banca popolare* of Bologna has in twenty years advanced £1,160,000 to this class; the Cremona People's Bank in 1897 advanced them £143,000 out of a total of loans and discounts of nearly £400,000; the Piacenza Savings Bank makes a special class of ad-

vances to them at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in 1899 lent in this way nearly £8000; the little Savings Bank of Città di Castello devotes £1000 to agricultural loans. Several banks discount the credits of the local Agricultural Syndicates and Village Banks at preferential rates; thus in 1899 the Padua Savings Bank discounted nearly £7000 to 2240 persons, of whom 1190 were farmers and 445 were artisans and labourers, seven-eighths of the advances being expended on agricultural purposes, chiefly the purchase of animals, manure, and sulphur. Here and there a People's Bank is purely agricultural, as that of Sansevero in the province of Foggia, which has created a flourishing community of small proprietors by enabling them to break up worthless land and plant it with vines.

At the same time it is a just criticism, that, wisely or unwisely, the banks have neglected the very poor. The shopkeepers' influence is seen in their dislike to assist Distributive Cooperative Societies; and, by making saving a condition of credit, they have shut out the mass of workmen, who have no security to offer but their strength and skill. The Italian People's Banks have, contrary to the advice of many of their friends, adopted the principle of limited liability; and this, though it has enabled them to attract the middle classes, has shut out the workmen, who, as the Village Banks have proved, might have safely been admitted under a system of unlimited liability. A certain effort has been made to reach them by means of a special class of "loans on honour" (*prestiti sull'onore*) to men who have no security to offer. These loans are made,

often free or at nominal rates of interest, generally for sums below £8, though they sometimes range up to £16 or £20. They are often worked through the Friendly Societies, and are generally confined to their members. In 1898 forty-nine People's Banks and a few Savings Banks had the system at work, though the total sum advanced was probably under £30,000. As a rule, the loans seem to be punctually repaid; at Cremona only 3 per cent. has been lost, at the Bologna *Banca popolare di credito* 3.3 per cent.; at the Piacenza Savings Bank in 1899 less than £20 were lost on £2280; the People's Bank of Noventa Vicentina has lent £1600 absolutely without loss; one small Catholic Savings Bank in an agricultural town near Bergamo has in fifteen years lent £6000 with a loss of £2 only. But in the case of the richer banks it is sometimes found that the borrowers think that the bank can afford to lose, and will not repay. At the best, it is rather a charity to tide over a difficulty than a step to the labourer's progress. Signor Luzzatti is probably right in his contention that the needs of the poor are best met by a special kind of bank. We have seen what the Village Banks are doing for the poorer peasants, and already there are over 1000 *Casse di prestito*,¹ generally started by Friendly Societies or the Catholics, which are introducing the same system into the towns.

The Post Office Savings Bank is only a quarter of a century old. It is expanding more rapidly than the

¹ 1151 belonging to Friendly Societies in 1895; 33 Catholic *Casse* in towns in 1899.

private savings banks, though it is still very weak in the districts where they are strong. It pays 2.88 per cent. in interest. It seems to appeal to a smaller kind of thrift than the private savings banks do; the average of its deposits is £6. 17s. 1d., as against £35. 2s. in the private savings bank. About £12,000 is collected annually from school children. No doubt it does valuable work in appealing to the very small depositor or in filling up gaps, where private savings banks do not exist. But it has none of their local usefulness, it makes no school of civic training. And in Italy, at all events, savings are better employed in fostering industry than in helping to fill the purse of a prodigal Government.

Distributive cooperation does not flourish in Italy, though it is probable that the number of stores has doubled in the last twelve years. Wherever Socialism penetrates, even among the miserable labourers of the Piedmontese plain, the cooperative store follows; and where the Socialists have come to control the stores in the towns, they have given them new life and higher ideals. There are now, so far as can be ascertained, about 1260 societies, a large proportion of which are attached to Friendly Societies. No complete statistics are obtainable as to their position, but with the exception of some stores of the Civil Service type, such as the *Unione cooperativa* of Milan and the *Unione militare* of Rome, there seem to be very few that do any considerable trade. Piedmont is the only district, where the movement has made real headway. Here it has about 95,000 members, and has an extended footing in the

villages. The Railwaymen's Society at Turin had in 1897-98 a membership of nearly 5500 and did a business of £72,000; another society at Turin did a business of £28,000 in the same year. A store at Sampierdarena had, in 1890, 2200 members, a capital and reserve fund of nearly £14,000, and a business of £44,000. Most of the stores sell at cost price, being by some strange fatuity penalized by the Revenue, if they sell at a profit. A large number allow credit. There is a National Cooperative League with 334 federated productive and distributive societies, which claim a membership of 220,000 and an annual business of nearly £1,300,000. The distributive societies have been signalled out during the Conservative reaction of late years for the special hostility of the Government, partly because they often form centres of Radical or Socialist activity, still more, probably, at the prompting of the hostile private tradesman. A law of 1870 exempted Cooperative Societies from paying the local duties on food supplied by them. The exemption, though ambiguously worded, was no doubt intended to be a comprehensive one, but the authorities have steadily tried to narrow it, and in 1897 the new law on local duties restricted it to those societies that sell at cost price and to members only. And, not content with worrying them through the revenue authorities, it has been a favourite practice of the Government since 1894 to dissolve societies on the ground that they fostered revolutionary agitation. In the dark days of 1898 they were dissolved by the score and their property confiscated, to glut the senseless hostility of officialdom

and the jealousies of the trading interests. The *decreto-legge* was regarded by them, as by every form of working-class combination, as a standing menace to their existence. So precarious is their position felt to be, that a section of the Socialists urge that in face of official hostility it is labour thrown away to promote them. It is little wonder that they are driven more and more into political agitation.

Productive cooperation seems to be making fair progress, but information respecting its present position is extremely meagre. The great development of Co-operative Dairies has already been referred to. Exclusive of these and the Cooperative Labour Societies, the Government statistics placed the number of productive societies in 1896 at 404, but this is probably an exaggeration, and the Cooperative Congress of 1893 was probably nearer the mark in putting them at 100. Before 1875 only one society existed, and the great majority have come into life since 1886. The Shipbuilders' Society at Sampierdarena, which began in 1883 with subscriptions of 2½d. a week, had in 1899 a capital and reserve of £8600, and made a profit of £800 on the year's working. A Tailors' Society at Turin, with branches at Genoa and Rome, has existed since 1874, and in 1898 had a capital of over £7000. The Tan-ners' Society at Bra did in the same year a business of over £16,000, and the Society of Filemakers at Forno Rivara, near Turin, a business of over £6000. The Printers' Society of Milan had in 1899 a business of £5000, a capital and reserve of £2160, and a very small profit. The Cooperative Printing

Society of Como has in the eleven years since its start in 1889 made a profit of £600, of which half goes to labour, and it is increasing the wages and shortening the hours of its men. There are a score or more of cooperative bakeries. The first was founded by the parish priest of Bernate Ticino near Abbiategrasso; it possesses a mill and bakehouse, and supplies its members with wholesome bread, the profits going to the sick and the schools. Another, started by the Catholics at Bergamo in 1895 in order to break down a ring of millers and bakers, also owns its mill, and in its first two years sold £25,000 worth of bread and flour. There have been several essays at cooperative farming, but apparently the only societies now existing are the *Società Cooperativa Agricola* of Calvenzano near Treviglio, which stocks its land and lets it on *mezzadria* tenancies, apparently to members, and the *Cooperativa Agricola Italiana*, with 1140 members and £28,000 capital, which has taken up and reclaimed 1100 acres of waste land at Surigheddu in Sardinia, and has another farm at Medole on the battlefield of Solferino. There is an interesting agricultural colony at Ostia on a semi-cooperative footing; some sixty workers in different trades, belonging to the Cooperative Labour Society of Ravenna, have formed a self-contained community here, and appear to be successful; but they have benefited too much from the late King's munificence to make a fair experiment.

Italian working men have developed a type of productive cooperation, that is probably unique. The building speculations and the lavish extension of public

works in the seventies created for the first time in Italy a large class of unskilled labourers, who were the first to suffer from any depression. In 1883 the labourers (*braccianti*) of Ravenna founded a Cooperative Society to obtain contracts of irrigation and drainage. Their success was followed by a rapid expansion of the movement among labourers and masons, especially in Romagna and Emilia; and though their numbers dwindled in the depression of the early nineties, there were still 513 Cooperative Labour Societies (*società cooperative di lavoro*) at the end of 1895. They have been for the most part financed by the Friendly Societies and People's and Savings Banks. Their work being generally navvy work or comparatively simple building, they have had no need of much directing capacity, except to estimate the cost of the work, and they appear to be organized with considerable skill and work with little friction. The men are divided into gangs, working generally on piecework, and any profits are divided among them. Some of them have met with a fair success. In nine years (1889-1897) 213 societies took public contracts to the value of £720,000. The Ravenna Society, which began with subscriptions of 9½d. a month, had over 2000 members in 1890, had found sufficient credit to borrow £9000 from People's and Savings Banks, and in the two preceding years did £80,000 worth of work at a profit of £1800; in 1893 it had a capital of over £6000. The masons of Bologna in 1887-1889 did £20,000 of work. The masons of Milan after ten years' existence had 806 members in 1899, with a capital and reserve fund of £2200 and a

pension fund of £3400. The *Società Vitruvio* of Rome, composed of 129 workmen of various trades, executed in its first four years (1892-1896) over £20,000 of work, and was purchasing an estate of forty-five acres by instalments. The Labourers' Society of Cavarzere had in 1896 a capital of £1260. Some of these societies have had important public works entrusted to them. They have put up the fittings of the new Chamber of Deputies; at Milan they have carried out several large municipal works; at Parma they have paved the streets and built the public abattoirs. But the history of most of the Labour Societies has been a chequered one. They have found it difficult to obtain work; contractors have outbid them, officials have hampered them; and as work failed to come in, their numbers dwindled, till most of them have hardly more than a nominal existence. A law of 1889 was passed to facilitate the concession of public contracts to them. But it limited them to contracts of smaller value than £4000, and required a deposit of 10 per cent. A Government Order passed in June 1898 seems on the whole to have improved their chances; but both the law of 1889 and the later Order have hampering restrictions, which prevent many societies from applying for contracts, and the Senate has three times rejected a Bill promoted by Signor Luzzatti to put the matter on a more satisfactory footing. No doubt the task of the Government has not been an easy one. Bogus societies have been started in the interest of private contractors; and it is obviously necessary to have some sort of security that the contracts will be carried out. But it is probable that the legislature might have done more,

and that its moderately good intentions have often miscarried from want of sympathy among the officials who had to execute them. That in spite of all difficulties some of the Labour Societies have succeeded so well is strong testimony to the Italian workman's power of organization.

Savings Banks, People's Banks, Cooperative Societies, all trace their descent more or less directly from Friendly Societies, the primal form of working-class organization. But the Friendly Societies themselves have less vitality than the movements that have issued from them. It is true that they are numerous. But they are small and isolated, though the Friendly Societies' League which was started last year marks, perhaps, the first step to federation. Their contributions are small, their benefit pay proportionately small; in a society at Pistoia, for instance, the former varies from 1s. 1d. to 1s. 5½d. per month, the latter is 1s. 1½d. a day for three months and half as much for the next three months. Their programme is a big one, and generally includes not only sick pay but funeral pay and old age pensions, sometimes, too, out-of-work and accident pay. But as a matter of fact their funds hardly ever make it possible to provide any but the first. Here and there we find tiny pensions given; a society at Parma pays £2. 8s. a year, an excellent women's society at Cremona pays 3½d. to 4d. a day. But no purely working-men's societies have a true fund for pensions, and hence they can only pay them by grace of a chance endowment, or during a temporary abundance of funds. The State, perhaps wisely, has discouraged

them from undertaking a responsibility beyond their means, and the judges have interpreted the vague wording of the law to disallow any registered society from granting fixed pensions.¹ As a matter of fact, however, only one-sixth of the societies have registered themselves, in spite of the exemption from income-tax and stamp-duty which registration gives.

At all events, whatever may be the deficiencies of the Friendly Societies, they have a good deal of the elasticity that distinguishes the other forms of Italian thrift. They have done much to found Trade Unions, and sometimes slide into them. They have spent a good deal on education by starting libraries or evening schools or providing books for members' children. They often, especially in Piedmont, have cooperative stores attached. They lend out small sums, doing on a little scale the work of the Savings Banks and People's Banks. The *Società operaia* of Castellamonte in Piedmont has £11,000 of savings deposits, and makes a profit of £2000 a year on its banking operations. A very few have built workmen's dwellings. Some make allowances to conscripts and their families. It is sometimes objected to them, that they "are the dry leaves on the tree of thrift," because they do not agitate for social reforms. It is true that on the whole they are an anti-Socialist force. They are promoted by men of all political sections, and at the recent congress at Milan Conservatives and Liberals, Socialists and Clericalists, met together to support a

¹ This does not apply to societies registered by royal decree; but very few have adopted this method of registration, owing to the strict inquiry which precedes it.

cause that is common to all. But their policy is not a confined or stagnant one, and probably they are doing their work all the better for their abstinence from politics. Their chief defects are actuarial. Perhaps the poverty of the land prevents them from raising their contributions to a figure which would enable them to carry out their comprehensive programmes. But the majority of them are too small to be successful, and more unity and systematization are needed to make their work as good as it might be.

There are very few established Trade Unions in Italy. "Defensive Unions" (*leghe di resistenza*) spring up under the pressure of some special grievance, organize a strike, and then dissolve again. Friendly Societies and Cooperative Stores often form the nucleus of some workmen's combinations, but have no special funds. The printers and glovemakers are probably the only trades that have anything approaching to a general Union. There is an ancient and powerful Union among the dock-labourers at Genoa, still ruled by a statute dating from 1350, which, besides securing a high rate of wages, gives pensions to old and incapacitated members. But strikes very seldom occur in which more than 1000 workmen are engaged, or last for more than a month. A large and unsuccessful strike of the Milan engineers in 1891; a strike, involving 12,000 men and women among the Como silk-spinners in 1888; another—the largest yet known in Italy—of the straw-plaiters of Tuscany in 1896 and 1897; and those, more or less recurrent every year, of the agricultural labourers of the lower Po valley, are the only notable cases. It

seldom happens that more than 40,000 persons have been on strike in a year. The law, under the new Penal Code, is fair; the earlier provisions, which punished either a strike or lock-out, if in the opinion of the courts they were without reasonable cause, have disappeared, and the strike only becomes penal where violence or threats are employed. But the Government pays little heed to the law. Men are convicted for violence on insufficient evidence; there is often, at all events in the agricultural districts, systematic intimidation by the authorities; in 1898 the workers on strike in the rice-fields near Rovigo were arrested in mass, and their cooperative store was forcibly dissolved; even as late as last year the Government broke down a strike in the same neighbourhood by sending soldiers to reap the crops, and Signor Saracco, the Premier, refused to arbitrate, when appealed to by the men. A well-meaning but ineffectual effort to constitute arbitration courts was made by the law of 1893, which authorized voluntary tribunals of *proviviri*. But in 1898 there were only thirty-two of these courts at work, and they intervened during the year in a poor total of eleven cases.

The Italian artisans, at all events in the great towns, seem to look for labour combination less in Trade Unions than in the Chambers of Labour (*Camere del Lavoro*), which, after a brief eclipse during the reaction of 1898, are now being rapidly created. They are modelled on the French *Bourses du Travail*, and aim at becoming focuses of every kind of workmen's organization under the semi-official patronage of the Municipal Council, from which they generally

receive a subsidy. The Milan Chamber, which takes the first place among them, acts as a labour bureau, and steadily discourages strikes by organizing an arbitration court of employers and workmen ; it has its representatives on the chief charities and hospital boards, acts as an inquiry office for emigrants or persons in need of charity, and supplies a people's lawyer ; it promotes technical schools for working-girls ; it lends its rooms for trade meetings and popular science lectures ; it sent local artisans to the Paris Exhibition ; above all, it holds a watching brief in the interest of the working classes of the city, organizing the agitation against the proposed income-tax on wages, pleading for free meals for school-children and a stricter enforcement of school attendance, for the concession of municipal contracts to Co-operative Societies, and the extension of workmen's trams. The Chambers of Labour have had a stony road. First founded in 1889, there were twenty of them in 1898. But the Government, at the bidding of the capitalists, harassed them, and tried to stop the municipal subsidies. The Catholics founded the rival *Segretariati del Popolo*—excellent institutions, but quite unrepresentative of labour. In the heyday of capitalist triumph in 1898 sixteen out of twenty Chambers were dissolved. But they have quickly reemerged. Last year they were being rapidly reconstituted, and in September there were eighteen already opened, and as many more in process of formation. It is probable that their Federation, which has a very Radical labour programme, will count among the great political forces of the country.

CHAPTER XI

POOR LAW AND CHARITY

Social legislation. Insurance against Accidents. Old Age Pensions. Absence of Poor Law. Charities. Charities Law. Private charity. Free meals for school-children. Local charities. Need of a Poor Law. *Monti di Pietà*.

ITALY is behindhand in social legislation, partly because more is left here than in other Western countries to local initiative, but mainly because government has been in the hands of a class, whose political cares are elsewhere. "If I try to interest a Deputy," says Professor Villari, "in the condition of the labourers at the Simplon Tunnel, he is only bored; if I talk to him of the latest shuffling of parties, his face lights up, and he regards me as a sensible man of the world." When the country was fighting reaction a year ago, there was a lift and keenness in politics; now that Parliament is trying to settle down to practical social work, the popular interest is dead. It is inevitable that there should be large gaps, even where legislation is of prime importance. There is an inadequate and almost unobserved factory law; there is more thorough legislation on public health, which, though far from being sufficiently executed, has done much to prolong life and improve the health of the people;¹ there are fairly satisfactory laws on charities and Co-

¹ We much regret that space does not allow us to give details of these

operative and Friendly Societies; an Emigration Bill has just passed Parliament. But the housing of the poor, the land question, the malaria question, the whole problem of pauperism, have had little or no attention given to them.

The most interesting social legislation is that which has been recently passed, dealing with Workmen's Insurance against Accidents and Old Age Pensions. The voluntary thrift societies failed, as we have seen, to cope with either question, and the State has stepped in, prompted, no doubt, by Bismarck's legislation in Germany. As early as 1883 a National Fund for Insurance against Accidents (*Cassa nazionale di assicurazione per gli infortuni degli operai sul lavoro*) was formed by arrangement between the Government and ten of the leading Savings and other Banks, the Savings Bank of Milan taking the greater share of the responsibility and having in return the control of the Fund. The banks agreed to create a guarantee fund of £60,000, and the State exempted it and its operations from taxation. But insurance was voluntary, and though many of the larger firms took out policies for their men, the scheme reached only a limited proportion of workers. In 1898 a law was passed to make insurance against accidents compulsory. It excluded seamen, the great majority of agricultural labourers, and employees in very small shops, but all other workmen are brought under it. Every employer is bound to insure his men against accidents entailing death or more than five days' absence from work; and, contrary to the provisions of its

German and Austrian models, the whole cost of insurance is thrown on him. Insurance may be effected either in the Fund of 1883 or in any other approved Insurance Society. Railways and groups of employers may contract out of the Act, provided that they have schemes which offer terms as good as those under it. The premium must be such as will secure, in the case of death or total and permanent incapacity for work, a sum equivalent to five years' wages with a minimum of £120, such sum, in the case of incapacity for work, to be given in the form of a pension for life; in the case of total but temporary incapacity, half the man's wages after the sixth day from the accident; in the case of permanent but partial incapacity, five times the estimated difference between his year's wages and what he would earn if he were not disabled; in the case of temporary and partial incapacity, half the same difference on his weekly wage, to be paid from the sixth day after the accident. It will be seen that the compensation is more generous than that under the English Act of 1897. The law is, no doubt, a valuable one. The exclusion of certain classes is unfortunate; and here and there, in works where good compensation schemes already existed, the result has been to disorganize them. But the general effect can hardly fail to be good.

In the same year, 1898, a tentative solution of Old Age Pensions became law. The question is one of long standing in the Italian Parliament. Forty-two years ago, in the year of Magenta and Solferino, a Pensions Law was passed in Piedmont, though in the

national struggle it seems to have been forgotten and became a dead letter. Periodically since 1877 the matter has come before the Chamber. There have been all through the history of the movement two rival schemes, one for a central national fund, the other for State subsidies to the pension funds of Friendly Societies or Savings Banks. The law of 1898 leant to the former principle, in spite of the opposition of the Friendly Societies. A National Fund (*Cassa nazionale di previdenza per la vecchiaia e per l'invalidità degli operai*) is instituted with a capital of £400,000, of which half comes from the accrued profits of the Post Office Savings Bank. A slight concession is made to the larger Friendly Societies and Savings Banks by allowing them to act as agencies of the Fund with a certain amount of freedom. The law (following in this respect French and not German precedent) is not compulsory, nor does the State pledge itself to make up the pension to any given minimum. But in addition to the capital endowment, it hands over to the Fund every year half the annual profits of the Post Office Savings Bank, and every person who pays to the Fund has an equal bonus, in no case exceeding 9s. 7d., put annually to his credit from the income of the Fund. Any working man or woman may insure himself by paying into the Fund an annual premium not less than 4s. 9d., or more than £4. His pension, provided that he has been insured for not less than twenty-five years, begins at his option at either sixty or sixty-five, and of course varies according to the amount and duration of his insurance. A person starting at twenty and in-

vesting 9½d. a month will at sixty years, assuming that his bonus is 8s. a year, have an annuity of £13 or £10. 11s., according to the category in which he invests; or at sixty-five he will have an annuity of £23. 16s. or £17. 15s. 3d. He can, if he likes, invest on the condition that in the event of death before pension age, his premiums, without interest or bonuses, shall be returned to his heirs. In the event of invalidity before pension age, his annuity begins at once, if he has paid in to the Fund for five years.

The Fund has only been in working order for a little over a year, and it is too early to speak of results. The great Savings Banks seem to approve it, for some of them have made generous donations to its funds. The Socialists recommend their adherents to insure in it, and so thoroughly have they endorsed its principle, that Old Age Pensions have disappeared from the minimum programme, and reform of the Fund has taken their place. But the Friendly Societies have given it a lukewarm welcome. They dislike its halting and tentative character. They have all the Italian working man's suspiciousness of anything that emanates from his Government, and the constitution of the Board of Control, which denies it any independence of the Ministry for the time being, has fed their distrust. The wiser heads among them urge that they should take it as an instalment, and agitate for its improvement—for the representation of Friendly Societies on the Board of Control, for the guarantee by the State of a minimum pension, for the admission of middle-class members of thrift societies. The Thrift Congress at

Milan last year took a middle course, recommending that Friendly Societies should not insure their members collectively, but that workmen should insure themselves individually.

There is no legal right of the poor to maintenance in Italy, as in England. There is no public provision for able-bodied paupers, except that the police may send them at the public expense to their native place. The infirm poor have to be placed in an infirmary or hospital, and pauper children under nine years in a charity school, the expense falling on the charities of the place, where the pauper has his settlement, or, if these are insufficient, on the communal rates, or, in the last resort, on the State. If the authorities fail to do this, the pauper is permitted to beg; but begging is strictly forbidden to the able-bodied, though in spite of the numerous prosecutions for begging (21,000 in 1885), the law is much honoured in the breach. Relatives in better circumstances may be compelled to contribute to the maintenance of the infirm and children. There is a better provision for the sick poor. Every commune is bound by law to pay a resident doctor and midwife to attend the poor free of charge; in some he is paid to attend all inhabitants. Sometimes the communes give free medicine to the poor. But the law is often indifferently observed, and in many rural districts, at all events, it is nearly or quite a dead-letter. The Provincial Councils are bound to maintain pauper lunatics and (conjointly with the communes) foundlings. And both provinces and communes have

large optional powers to make grants to infirmaries, hospitals, orphanages, in fact to any kind of charity. These optional grants amounted in 1897 to £560,000, and are steadily increasing. The total cost to local authorities in poor relief and charity is £2,600,000.

The lack of public provision for the poor is to a certain extent compensated by the magnificent public charities. Italy has always led the way in charity among the nations of Western Europe. Its hospitals date from the early middle-ages, its *Monti di Pietà* were installed by the Franciscans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The great medieval hospitals and orphanages still exist. The principal hospital at Florence, that of Santa Maria Nuova, was founded by the father of Dante's Beatrice. The orphanage of the Bigallo owes itself to St. Peter Martyr. The Foundling and Children's Hospital of the Innocenti, that Brunelleschi designed and Andrea Della Robbia adorned, gained the highest honour at the Paris Exhibition last year. In more modern times the *Scuole Leopoldine*, founded by the reforming Grand Duke Leopold at Florence in the last century, are perhaps the earliest technical schools for girls. The Florentines claim that the first Infant School was that started by the Jews of their city in 1735.

The charities have a magnitude worthy of their history. The property of endowed charities (exclusive of those of religious and educational endowments) was valued in 1880, when the last returns were made, at more than £68,000,000.¹ Of this, the hospitals had

¹ It is impossible to give the exact figures, as some returns do not distinguish between the amounts that go respectively to charitable and ecclesiastical purposes.

£25,000,000; orphanages, £14,000,000; charities for the relief of the poor, £11,000,000; infirmaries, nearly £5,000,000. The gross income for charitable purposes was then about £3,500,000, but taxes, estate expenses, and expenses of management absorbed 43 per cent., and the net available income was under £1,800,000.¹ When the contributions of local authorities and private subscriptions and casual receipts are added, the total net revenue was about £3,400,000. And this amount has rapidly increased since then. In spite of the efforts of the clergy to divert generosity into ecclesiastical channels, the value of bequests to public charities in the eighteen years from 1881 to 1898 has been nearly £12,000,000, including two munificent bequests of £800,000 to the charities of Genoa, and £400,000 to found a charity at Milan.

The control of charitable endowments is regulated by a law passed in 1890. The earlier legislation had aimed at minimizing the power of Government to control or reform, and a colossal scandal resulted. Many charities were utilized for political or ecclesiastical purposes, or frittered away in demoralizing doles, or squandered on unnecessary officials or in helping the well-to-do, probably even to a greater extent than in unreformed charities in England. In one commune only a quarter of the charities reached the poor; there was an orphanage, where the expenses of administration more than doubled that of maintaining the in-

¹ The gross income of endowed charities in England and Wales (independently of voluntary subscriptions and donations) was estimated in 1877 at about £2,200,000.

mates ; at Venice one-third of the population were in receipt of charity. The law, which Crispi passed in 1890, established a Council of Charity (*Congregazione di carità*) in every commune ; the Council is appointed by the Communal Council ; any elector, except officials and clergy in the cure of souls, may serve, and women are eligible. The Council controls the public charities of the commune, but not, as a rule, those with an income exceeding £200, or the larger hospitals and lunatic asylums, or foundling hospitals,¹ educational foundations, and reformatories. They often manage the local *Monte di Pietà*. It has been their duty to reorganize the charities of the commune, and though they are often tied by the terms of the old deeds, and the reform of the dowry charities has been incomplete, yet they have redeemed a great number of charities from obsolete and pauperizing purposes. In some towns general schemes have been drawn up, apportioning the small endowments between the Council and the independent foundations. At Bologna the Council takes the income of 243 old charities, worth £34,000 ; at Ferrara it has 52, worth £41,000. The Councils spend their funds chiefly on infirmaries, poor-houses, out-door relief, relief of the *poveri vergognosi* (the "shamefaced poor," who have come down from better circumstances), maternity cases, and dowries. The Council of Charity at Ferrara, for instance, with a net income of £10,000, spends £3000 on a poor-house, £2700 on an infir-

¹ The number of babies left in the boxes at the foundling hospitals has decreased by more than half in the last twenty years. In 1896 there were 4524.

mary, £1200 in out-door relief by monthly payments of 2s. 4d. to 16s., and smaller sums on maternity cases, dowries, and evening schools; and it administers independently a large charity of recent foundation with a property of £180,000. The Council at Milan gives out-door relief in quarterly payments of 16s. to £1, and in the case of the *poveri vergognosi* of not less than £1. 4s.; it grants dowries of £4 each, makes allowances of 12s. a month to fatherless children and of £7 a year to infirm persons, gives maternity assistance, and supports a certain number of scholarships.

An essential part of the work of the Councils lies in the poor-houses and infirmaries, which take the place of our workhouses, and which have spread rapidly during the last thirty years. They are infirmaries for men and women who are entirely or in part incapable of regular work, where the partially infirm are employed on light work and take one-third or two-thirds of the profits, while those who are employed in the domestic service of the house are paid a small wage. Beggars may be compelled to enter a *ricovero* (sometimes there is a separate *ricovero di mendicITÀ*), but otherwise there is no compulsion or (apart from the loss of their vote) any taint of pauperism, and the pleasant business of work, that is graduated to the strength of each, contrasts with the dreariness of our own workhouses. Each inmate costs about 8d. a day, and the *ricoveri* are largely subsidized by local authorities. In 1885 there were 671 *ricoveri*, with 37,000 inmates; now there are probably more.

Outside the endowed charities, there is an immense

amount of private charity, lay and ecclesiastical, Catholic and Protestant and unsectarian. Charity, like everything else in Italian life, has shared in the revival of late years, and the very keen interest shown in economic questions has taken shape in a multitude of agencies for the relief of the destitute and the sick. It is only possible here to refer to some of the more prominent branches of this activity. There are some excellent industrial homes for boys and girls. The Conversini Home at Pistoia was founded in 1880 with an endowment of £44,000 for poor boys, who are not orphans; it has two branches, industrial and agricultural, and the boys are credited with one-third of the profits of their work, their respective shares being invested in a Savings Bank, from which, as a rule, they cannot be withdrawn till they have attained their majority. There is a similar institution for 150 girls at Piacenza. Near Rome there is an excellent agricultural school for boys (*Colonia agraria fuori Porta del Popolo*), where waifs and strays are removed from city influences, and learn farm work under the charge of a cultured, earnest young priest. The Florentine Protestants have a farm-school for poor children at Trebbiolo. At Volterra orphans are boarded out with foster-parents till they are seventeen, under the supervision of doctor, priest, and committee of ladies. With characteristic Italian thoughtfulness, the children are dressed in the ordinary style of the district to which they are sent, so as to avoid the orphanage stamp. A home at Padua looks after boys from very poor or bad homes during the day, feeding them and sending the

elder ones to work, the younger ones to school. The homes for abandoned children, founded by Don Bosco and the "Cooperators of St. Francis de Sales," give an industrial and commercial training, or in the case of the cleverer boys a classical education, which trains them to be school teachers or priests.

During the last twenty years there has been a wide diffusion of "cheap kitchens" (*cucine economiche*), where wholesome and well-cooked food can be had at low charges, probably generally below cost price. A plate of *minestra* costs $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 1d., a plate of meat and vegetables 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 2d., 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of bread $\frac{1}{2}$ d., $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of wine 1d. Tickets for meals are often given in charity, but the kitchens are widely used by working men, who pay for their own meals. At Turin they have sold 1,400,000 portions in a year. At Florence they administer the alms of the Council of Charity, by distributing portions of cooked or uncooked food. At Milan there is a society, subsidized by the Municipality and the Savings Bank, which supplies food to the sick poor.

Care for the sick has been especially directed of late years towards combating consumption, which is a more than usually fatal scourge in Italy. There is a National League for the cure of consumption. A fund is being raised at Florence to found a sanatorium for children in early stages of the disease, where they will be treated on the lines of the French and German sanatoriums. Milan has recently decided to build a consumption hospital.

The most active philanthropic movement of the last few years has been in the provision of free meals for

school children. Even at Milan there are a great many absentees from school owing to sheer poverty, and want of clothes and food is perhaps the chief reason everywhere why the law of compulsory attendance is so largely a dead-letter. A little seems to have been done at Milan privately for a quarter of a century past, and in several towns (first at San Remo) the movement for municipal support began in 1896, but in the great majority of cases it dates from an appeal of the Minister of Education in the following year. The *Comitati di Patronato*, who organize it, have semi-official recognition; they generally receive grants from the State and Provincial Councils and to a larger extent from the communes, hampered though these are by the small margin of revenue that is available. At Rome the Commune grants annually £2000, at Turin £800, at Cremona £720; at Pavia it has given £400 for the plant of the kitchen. At Milan the Municipal Council has recently taken the organization into its own hands, and proposes to find £4000 out of a total expenditure of £5760. The Committees supply one free meal a day to necessitous children for longer or shorter periods, sometimes for a few weeks only, sometimes for the whole winter, at Milan for ten months. At Pavia food is also sold to those who can afford to pay. Each meal costs about 1d. The proportion of children, who receive free meals, varies very much; at Milan it is 16 per cent., at Pavia 28, in the villages round Perugia 68. Some Committees supply clothes in addition, some give books, copy-books, and pencils, some give prizes for regular

attendance by starting Savings Bank accounts. The belated Italian school statistics give no returns later than those for 1895-96, and we have therefore no means of testing results on school attendance, but the reports of the work of the *Patronato* speak warmly both of its educational and moral results. It is pleasant to note that the Committee at Florence receives many small subscriptions of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 2d. But the work is much hampered by want of funds ; sometimes suburban schools, where the need is greatest, go uncared for ; and as the Milanese have recognized, the matter requires to be organized by the Municipal Councils, before it can be thoroughly carried out. In some of the larger towns the movement has expanded into an organization for taking care of children between six and ten years out of school hours and in the holidays (*educatorii*). Kindergarten games, cooking classes, gymnastics, and singing are held in the school buildings till the hour when the parents return from work. Every child has to wash itself daily, and on fixed days has a bath. In the vacations and on the weekly holiday on Thursdays the *educatorii* are open all day, and two free meals are given. At Milan they are maintained in forty schools, at Rome, where the commune spends £3200 on them, in fifteen. In several cities kindred societies send children to the sea or hills in the hot weather. The Florentine "summer school" at Montepiano, which has grants from Government and the local authorities, takes in sixty delicate children every summer, and teaches them during their stay.

A summary of the principal charities of a few towns

will show how thick is the net-work of public and private charity. Florence boasts its hospital of Santa Maria Nuova with 1200 beds, another general and an ophthalmic hospital; the orphanage of the Bigallo, which maintains 890 abandoned or neglected children, and three other orphanages; the Foundling Hospital of the Innocenti, which takes in 700 illegitimate and 250 legitimate children every year; the *Pia Casa di Lavoro*, which shelters the infirm and educates poor children; a lunatic asylum with room for 700 inmates; a charity which spends £4500 a year in clothes and bedding and milk for the poor; the ancient Fraternity of the Misericordia, which takes the sick and dead to hospital or burial, grants money to the sick and watches by their beds; an old charity for helping the *poveri vergognosi*; five homes for girls who have fallen or are in danger; a society to look after semi-abandoned boys who have left school; another to send scrofulous children to sea baths; a charity that gives bonuses to the savings of school children; and cheap kitchens. And turning to educational charities, it has its infant schools, two schools for the blind, two large and successful schools of domestic economy for girls, a technical school for boys with public lectures for adult artisans, and the summer school of Montepiano. Or again, the town of Piacenza, with 35,000 inhabitants, has a hospital with 400 beds, an orphanage, a home for incurables, a *Casa di ricovero*, industrial schools for boys and girls, four infant schools, a charity to assist poor lads to an art training, a retreat for ancient priests, cheap kitchens, and several charities for doles and dowries.

Cremona, with a population of 37,000, has its *Ospedale Maggiore*, dating from the fifteenth century, another general hospital, a children's hospital, a foundling hospital, a charity for sending scrofulous persons to sea baths ; it has its home for the aged, which shelters 200 men and women over seventy years, its infirmary for 160 infirm paupers, a home for babies whose mothers cannot nourish them, a charity for sending delicate children to the hills, a discharged prisoners' society, and lay and ecclesiastical societies for helping the poor ; an orphanage, a school for poor girls, a home for the fallen, a boys' refuge, and infant schools. The little country town of Lucignano, in the Val di Chiana, boasts its ancient hospital, its three ancient charities, now under the Council of Charity, which spends £160 a year on out-relief and maternity cases, its *confraternità di misericordia*, which helps and nurses the sick, assists at fires, and carries the dead to burial, its infant schools, and school to teach linen-weaving.

But richly as Italy is endowed by the generosity of past and present, it is questionable how far its voluntary system is a substitute for a poor law. The local inequality is great. While in some districts the vast charities lead to inevitable pauperisation, while those of Lombardy have a capital value of £20,000,000, and those of single cities like Milan and Bologna reach to £4,000,000 and £1,500,000 respectively, the endowments of Calabria count a poor £260,000. While the local authorities of Lombardy spend £420,000 on the poor, those of neighbouring Piedmont, with a population not much smaller, spend less than £200,000.

And the inequality tells sorest on the villages. While the larger communes spent in 1885 £36 per 100 inhabitants, the rural communes spent hardly over £3. In many a rural district there is no organized charity, except in severe winters or times of epidemic, and the only resource of the pauper is the beggar's pittance or the alms of the priest. It is the malarious districts of the South that have fewest hospitals, while the healthy Marches have most. A system, that depends on private generosity and the enterprise of local authorities, is bound to do least, where most is needed. And everywhere, even in the towns, seasons of industrial depression mean for multitudes of the able-bodied poor a degree of destitution which, but for a gentle climate and the patient Italian nature, would be intolerable. The absence of an efficient Poor Law not only means a constant wounding of the national conscience, but is ever threatening the social peace and perpetuating an environment that puts a drag on industrial and political progress.

Midway between charitable institutions and co-operative banks stand the *Monti di Pietà*, whose history belongs mainly to Italy, and which still probably have there a development unequalled in any other country. Their original and still their main purpose is to lend to the poor at low rates of interest on the security of pledges; and though they are an institution of the past, and show no great power of expansion, they have their use in saving the poor, who have no personal security to offer, from the oppression of the

usurer. The Milanese *Monti*, which take 400,000 pledges every year, have competed with the private pawnshops, which charge 30 per cent., so successfully, that 31 out of 46 have closed in fifteen years. In the whole country the *Monti* have over £3,000,000 lent out, the great bulk of it in quite small sums. But the larger *Monti* are more than public pawnshops. To some extent they cover the same ground as the People's Banks, making loans to shopkeepers on the security of their stock, and taking deposits to a total of £1,600,000. And in order to employ their surplus capital, and find the funds to pay their heavy working expenses, they carry on a banking business in loans and discounts. Hitherto powers as to deposits and banking have only been given to the larger banks, and it was even proposed by the Giolitti and Di Rudinì cabinets that all the *Monti* should be rigorously confined to their humbler function of pawnshops. The *Monti* have persistently agitated that the wider powers should be extended to all, and a law of 1898 allows any *Monte* to apply for powers both to take deposits and exercise safe banking operations, though it rests with the Government to accept or reject each application.

CHAPTER XII

EDUCATION

Elementary education. The communes and the schools. Voluntary schools. Secondary education. Universities. The educated unemployed.

EDUCATION is the gloomiest chapter in Italian social history, a chapter of painful advance, of national indifference to a primary need, of a present backwardness, that gives Italy (next to Portugal) the sad primacy of illiteracy in Western Europe. It is not that good intentions have been absent. The young kingdom set itself with zeal to make up the long arrears, that came from Governments which loved darkness. There is, and always has been, plenty of interest in education and a great deal too much theory. But a vicious system has spoilt all. There has been little consistency in law or policy. Laws and codes and ministerial circulars hurtle against each other, confusing all stability with their ill-ordered contradictions. There have been thirty-three Education Ministers since 1860, each eager to distinguish himself by upsetting his predecessor's work. Money has been stinted, and State and communes, lavish in all else, have economized in the most fruitful of national investments. Parliament, which has thrown away its millions on the army and unproductive public works,

doles its pittance to the schools with a miser's hand, has strangled evening schools by withdrawing most of its grants, has cut down the army schools, which at one time taught nearly every conscript to read and write. Communes, that can afford to build town-halls and subsidize theatres and put up statues and pay for illuminations and fireworks, are not ashamed to house their schools in stables, and keep the teacher waiting long months for his pitiable salary.

Nor is it that there has been no progress. Something has been done to pay off the terrible heritage of illiteracy that United Italy took over from the fallen Governments. The percentage of illiterates in 1867 was 78; in 1881, when the last census was taken, it had fallen to 67; in 1896 the percentage among army conscripts, which probably represents the normal condition of the male generation born in the early seventies, was 36. A comparison of illiteracy among conscripts with school attendance in the same year shows that in the North, at all events, there has been great progress in the latest generation. Two schools out of five are now classed as good, and perhaps would be so by an English standard. Here and there in the large towns, sometimes in whole provinces, as in those of Belluno and Novara, the standard is a high one. The Waldensians have found it necessary to close their schools in North Italy, because the improvement in the public schools has made it impossible to compete with them.

But though there is light in it here and there, it is a dark picture. The percentage of population at-

tending schools of all kinds was 8.2¹ in 1895, while in England and Wales at the same date it was 17.5, in France 16, in Prussia 15.6, even in Spain 10.5. Assuming that the illiteracy of conscripts is lower than that of both sexes together, between two-fifths and one-half of the adult population are still illiterate, and in the South the proportion probably reaches to at least three-quarters. Among the Italian immigrants into the United States the percentage of illiteracy is 46, while that of the Germans is less than 3. Education has been nominally compulsory since 1859, but only up to the third standard and between the ages of six and ten. And even this is largely a dead-letter. Prosecutions for non-attendance are probably unknown, and a head-inspector reports that he has never heard of one. The peasant, who wants his children to help in the fields, or earn a few pence at casual work; the town-labourer, whom the law allows to send his children to the silk or cotton factory at nine years; the mother, too poor to dress her children decently; the inhabitant of a scattered mountain hamlet miles distant from a school, may have no native dislike of education—nay, generally would like to give it to his children, but remorseless poverty forbids, unless the stronger arm of the law constrains. It is not surprising that in 1895-96 only 74 per cent. (1,830,000 in number²) of children of school age attended either public or

¹ Including infant schools. These are Signor Torraca's figures in the Official Report of the Ministry of Education for 1896-97. According to the *Annuario statistico*, the figures would be 9.35. See following note.

² Signor Torraca gives 1,670,000 attending the obligatory standards in the public schools. The *Annuario statistico* gives the numbers attending

private schools, that, after making every allowance for the sick and mentally deficient and children beyond the school radius, there are at least 500,000 children who evade the law. There are, it is true, bright exceptions. At Milan and Turin the attendance is very good; in a few provinces of the North—Belluno, Novara, Vicenza, Verona, Como, Cremona, Pavia—the percentage of absentees is 6 per cent. or less. But in many parts of Tuscany and the South half the children (even more of the girls) are habitual absentees, and in many country districts, even where the attendance is good in winter, the schools are deserted in the summer. At the little town of Spongano in Apulia, with a population of 2000, the average attendance at the boys' school is twenty-five, and of these hardly any come from the very poor. It is probable that the attendance of peasants' children would be improved, if, in place of the present cast-iron system, the rural communes were allowed to open the school in the evening instead of the daytime through the summer. The present¹ Minister of Education is apparently projecting a scheme somewhat on these lines for children over nine.

Outside the narrow limits of school age the figures show yet worse. Though the larger communes are bound to provide teaching in the higher standards, only 162,000 children remain after passing the three obligatory standards, and 60,000 are all that pass into

all standards in the public schools at 2,379,349, of whom 462,000, according to Signor Torraca, are past school age. Both sets of figures relate to the same year.

¹ In the Saracco Cabinet.

the fifth. Children under six are left to private enterprise, though the communes may help if they like, and the State sometimes makes small grants. In Piedmont and Lombardy there have been a good many infant schools (*asili infantili*), ever since the priest, Ferrante Aporti, pleaded in their interest more than half a century ago. But there is a great insufficiency of them in the rest of the country, and as a rule the teaching in them is of poor quality, especially in the *sale di custodia*, which are rather *crèches* than schools. Frobelian teaching is only adopted in a small minority; and only one in five is supported or subsidized by the communes. The evening and holiday schools are in even worse case. The law requires that every child, who does not pass into the upper standards, shall go through one course in them, and at one time over 650,000 children attended. But the partial withdrawal of the Government's grants (they are now £1. 4s. on the average to each school!) has ruined them, and the numbers have fallen to 150,000. Here and there private enterprise has supplied the want, as in the excellent *Scuola del Popolo* at Florence, with its 1800 pupils in every grade of technical and art subjects, where all the teaching is given gratuitously. But though there are brilliant exceptions like this in several of the large towns, and a good many holiday schools in Piedmont and parts of Lombardy, there is in the greater part of the country practically no provision for boys and girls of the working class who have left the elementary school. The Socialists demand that not only school attendance shall be compulsory up to

the fifth standard, but that there shall be a further obligatory attendance for four years at an evening or holiday school.

Even if the attendance were better, the conditions are such, as a rule, as to make the bare rudiments of education hardly possible. At least one-fifth of the school buildings are bad—close, insanitary, overcrowded, frequently unprovided with closets, occasionally placed in stables that have been adapted to the purpose. In whole districts sometimes hardly a school can boast a building specially constructed; dwelling-houses, suppressed convents, if not worse, supply the sole accommodation. The communes are too poor to build; the State makes a few loans on easy terms, but it normally takes two years to complete the formalities for one, and the Treasury grants less than half the sums applied for. The furniture is no better. In one district the inspector reports that the benches are “something horrible”; some schools, despite the Code, have not even a map of Italy; others provide no ink or pens; few have specimens for object-lessons. The great majority of the teachers are high-minded men and women, who, poor, overworked, ill-treated by the authorities, often barely tolerated by their neighbours, make a noble effort to inform and moralize their truant scholars. But their capabilities often fall short of their high purpose, and some have small stuff or training for their work. Italian schools are liberally staffed as compared with those of most other countries; but in more than half the schools a single teacher has to take three classes either of boys or girls; in

10,000 schools a master, or more frequently a mistress, has to teach three classes of both sexes. As a consequence, the teaching in the great majority of smaller schools is worse even than that of a bad village school in England. If one may judge from the inspectors' reports,¹ arithmetic (thanks largely, no doubt, to the use of decimals) is the only subject taught at all well in the average school. A great deal of time is necessarily occupied in teaching Italian to children, who only speak their dialect, and to whom the literary tongue is almost a foreign language. The quality of the writing may be judged from the fact that "calligraphy" is a separate subject only taught in the upper standards. After the elementary subjects, and a smattering of natural science taught incidentally with them, the acquirements of the rural scholar stop short. In the towns, where the upper standards are taught, the pupil learns some geography and history, and a little elementary science and geometry. Drawing is taught by one teacher in five, but seldom to much purpose. There are rarely sufficient specimens or apparatus for effective object-lessons. Singing is taught in many schools, as a rule poorly, but sometimes well. Instruction in needlework is generally indifferent, owing to the small attention given to it in the training colleges. Manual work and agriculture are taught in a handful of schools, the former chiefly in the neighbourhood of Florence and Milan. A certain number of teachers take the children for excursions, and collect objects for the school

¹ See Torraca in *op. cit.*

museum. Gymnastics are an obligatory subject, but they are much neglected, largely from the want of playgrounds. The examinations are generally conducted by incompetent local persons, and on no common principle.

Thus grievously has United Italy shortened its arm in fulfilling a primary duty. And the radical cause is the apathy or hostility of the ruling middle classes. The State has shut its ears to a clear call, and the communes, on whom it has shifted its responsibilities, do what they can to shirk an irksome and costly obligation. The Ministry of Education, compared with ours, is a pale ghost of authority. It indeed drafts laws, showers codes and circulars in self-destructive profusion, does something to protect the teachers, and has its small army of inspectors—a chief inspector (*provveditore*) for every province, a sub-inspector (*ispettore*) for every district. But it does nothing to enforce compulsory attendance, little to bring defaulting authorities to book. And the cause of its paralysis resides in its not controlling the purse-strings. The Government's budget for elementary education is less than £500,000. It grants some £16,000 in loans to build schools, and about £70,000 to supplement teachers' salaries in the poorer communes, it pays a quatum to the fund for teachers' pensions, subsidizes their mutual help societies, makes small grants to infant and evening and holiday schools, and helps to support training colleges. The great mass of the expense falls on the communes, which probably spend over £3,000,000 on elementary education.¹ Every commune is bound to maintain

¹ The total expense of the communes on education is a little under £3,400,000, but there are no figures to show how much of this goes to

a "lower-grade school," which includes the three first standards, and if its population exceeds 800, it must have separate schools for boys and girls. If a commune has a hamlet with more than fifty children of school age, distant $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from its centre, it must, as a rule, provide it with its own school. The larger communes (those with 4000 or more population) must have schools in the upper standards as well, separately for boys and girls. A voluntary school may be accepted in lieu of a public school, if it is sanctioned by the Provincial Council of Education and conforms in all respects to the Code. All public schools are free.

It is a meagre system, but it passes beyond the wishes or the powers of the communes. They are very poor. And though there are few, if any, villages without a school, the expense is cut down to a minimum. We have seen what the buildings are. Even with all the truancy that exists, there is often a great deficiency of accommodation in the winter months. The teachers' salaries are very low. The State has found it necessary to step in and fix a minimum; but the minimum only reaches in the "urban" schools of communes with more than 3000 population to a sum ranging between £36 and £53 for men, and between £29 and £42 for women, and in the "rural" schools of communes with more than 500 and less than 3000 population between £28 and £36 for men and between £22 and £29 for women. In the schools of communes below 500 population there is no minimum. The pay for a winter

secondary teaching. In 1897 they paid nearly £1,700,000 in elementary teachers' salaries.

school in them is often £4 or less. In the district of Bergamo there are forty schoolmasters, receiving less than £12 a year. (In addition, the commune has to contribute to the Teachers' Pension Fund.) And for even these miserable salaries the teacher has occasionally to wait for months, despite the stringent provisions of the Code. A few years ago, before the law became as drastic as it is now, the arrears were often so serious, that many teachers had to live on charity. The Chamber last year passed a resolution to increase the teachers' salaries, and they have a fairly strong organization, sufficient, it is to be hoped, to extort better terms from their ungenerous masters. But no mere increase of salary meets the difficulty, until the teacher has some fixity of tenure. As the law stands, if a teacher is not dismissed at the end of his first two years, he is deemed to be reappointed for six more, and if at the end of this second period the Provincial Council of Education gives him a satisfactory testimonial, he holds his appointment for life. While his appointment lasts, his salary rises automatically by one-tenth every six years. But in practice it obtains that the recalcitrant communes habitually give their teachers notice at the end of the first two years, and either evade the law by reappointing them under a new agreement, or turn them adrift, to be replaced by new men.

The communes are not only poor, they are often hostile. Of course there are many exceptions, where they do their best ; where the schools are well cared for, where the attendance is regular, where the teachers are

paid more than the minimum salary or provided with a house. But more often, to quote the inspectors' reports, "the communes are the bitterest enemies of the people's schools." Alike in North and South "the majority of the men who administer them and the greater part of the well-to-do hate and oppose popular education." In Sicily they have been known to destroy the registers of attendance. Sometimes they see in it "a levelling force, which frightens them," or cannot brook that the peasant's son should sit on the same benches as their own. The richer Syndics hardly conceal their hostility "under the specious pretext that an ignorant working man is more submissive;" and here and there, though by no means generally, they are backed by the priests, "who want to have the schools in their own hands, and only care to train the children to be obedient followers of themselves and enemies of Italian Unity." To a certain extent the backward communes are curbed by the Provincial Council of Education, which practically selects the teachers in those communes, that pay no more than the minimum salary, acting also as a court of appeal in disputes between teachers and authorities, and having the right to suggest to the communes any desirable improvements. But the only sufficient remedy is to place elementary education directly under the central Government, and pay a larger share of the cost from the national exchequer. The State has placed an impossible burden on the communes, and done its best to create every opportunity of friction between them and the teachers. It can only repair the evil by recalling powers, which it ought never to have abandoned.

There has been a considerable agitation in this direction for some years past, and it is reported that the present Government¹ intends to introduce a Bill to make teachers directly payable by the State, at all events in towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants.

It may be noted that the voluntary school question hardly exists in Italy.² "Private" schools have no assistance from the State, but any person, educationally and morally qualified, is competent to open one, and, provided that his school is sanitary and has nothing repugnant to morality or public order, it is exempt from further inspection. Attendance at a private school satisfies the law of compulsory attendance. There are a good many of them, but they are poorly attended, and the whole number of their scholars is only 210,000, as against 1,830,000 at the public schools, two-thirds of them being girls. Some, especially in Piedmont, have a good name, but the majority are either private speculations with scant educational aims, or are maintained by the Church for political ends. Their fees and their generally inferior quality make it difficult for them to hold their own, and though their numbers increase slightly, it is a much smaller growth than that of the public schools.

The Italian Government, like the true bourgeois that it is, has been more generous to higher than to elementary education, expending £1,100,000 on universities and secondary schools. In the bigger minds

¹ *I.e.* the Saracco Ministry.

² Respecting religious education, see below, p. 256.

of the men who made Italy, it was part of a complete and balanced scheme of graduated education. In latter days the children of the poor have been neglected, while those of the middle class have been only too elaborately provided for. The secondary schools of Italy are based on a careful system of classical and modern education. Classical schools are divided into *Gymnasiums* with a five years' course for boys who have left the elementary schools, and *Lyceums* with a three years' course for those who have passed through the *Gymnasiums*. The *Lyceums*, as a rule, are under Government, which provides the greater part of the cost; but both *Lyceums* and *Gymnasiums* may be established by local authorities or public bodies or private persons with or without grants from Government. The majority of the *Gymnasiums* are maintained by the communes. There are 50,000 pupils in the *Gymnasiums* and 17,000 in the *Lyceums*, of which 25,000 and 11,000 respectively belong to the Government's schools. The curriculum is almost strictly classical; Greek and Latin are compulsory and the most important subjects; advanced mathematics up to elementary trigonometry are taught in the *Lyceums*, but hardly at all in the *Gymnasiums*; French is taught in the *Gymnasiums* of South Italy only and in none of the *Lyceums*; German and English have hitherto been entirely neglected, though a projected order of the Education Department proposes to make German alternative with Greek at the *Lyceums*; a little natural history is taught, and a considerable amount of physical science in the *Lyceums*. The modern side of

secondary education is represented by the Technical Schools and Institutes. These again may be established either by the Government or local authorities or private persons; the two latter classes may, if certified to be up to the standard of the Government's schools, claim a grant. The Schools are, as a rule, maintained by the communes, the Institutes by the provinces and the State, the commune supplying the building. The Technical Schools have a good modern curriculum, but are technical only in name; their three years' course includes French, arithmetic and book-keeping, elementary algebra and geometry, drawing, geography, history, and a very miscellaneous smattering of elementary science. The four years' course at the Technical Institutes gives a general business training rather than specialized industrial instruction. Modern languages (French and German or English) and mathematics are the chief subjects; in the commercial section a good deal of book-keeping is taught; there is a special section for the training of land agents and surveyors; but chemistry and physics and natural science occupy an unimportant position. 37,000 pupils attend the Technical Schools and 10,000 the Technical Institutes. In all these secondary schools the fees are rather high, but lads in narrow circumstances may be admitted free. They are directly controlled by the Ministry of Education, which misrules them with the rod of anarchy that characterizes all its work.

Technical education, properly so-called, has not been entirely neglected. There are a good many

technical schools under various names for workmen :¹ "schools of art applied to industry," which teach general principles of decorative art to 11,000 pupils ; special trade classes, often with workshops attached, with 14,000 pupils ; schools of design and modelling—generally established by Friendly Societies or other private bodies—with 12,000 pupils ; technical and commercial classes for girls, with 5000 pupils. Some of these, as for instance the Alessandro Volta School in practical engineering at Naples, and the *Scuole Leopoldine* for girls at Florence, are excellent in their way. But there is little that corresponds to the great technical schools of other countries, or serves to train managers or conduct research. There are, indeed, six higher schools of applied art, but they have only 850 pupils. The agricultural schools, planned on elaborate lines, are a recognized failure. The mining schools have only 42 pupils. On the other hand, the three commercial schools of Venice, Genoa, and Bari are doing excellent work, especially the former, in training young men for commercial posts and the consular and higher Civil Service. There is rich provision for teaching the fine arts in twenty-six schools, some of them old foundations (that at Florence dates from 1350), with 3800 pupils. There is a private school of decorative art at Florence for artisans, which executes work of a very high quality.

¹ "People's Universities," on the lines of our University Extension movement, have quite recently been started at Milan and Turin, and others are projected at Rome, Venice, Bologna, and Messina. The first session of the Milanese *Università Popolare* last autumn was successful. Details in the *Secolo* of January 3-4, 1891.

Italy has always been rich in Universities. She can boast eleven that date from the fourteenth or earlier centuries. Now she has twenty-one, besides the Colleges of Milan and Florence and several other schools, holding university rank, and university courses at three Lyceums. Some of the ancient Universities have dwindled to insignificance; but nine count over 1000 students each, and Naples has nearly 5000. Altogether there are 23,000 going through a university training. The fees vary from £18 to £34, according to the faculty, but students in narrow circumstances, and those who earn a high percentage of marks, can claim exemption. The Universities stand sorely in need of reform. Some of the professors are able or even distinguished men, but the stipends are as a rule too low to draw first-rate scholars, and it is difficult for men, who are practically employees of the Italian Government, to show any independence. The curriculum is stereotyped and cramped; the examinations only cover subjects taught in class, and discourage individual thought and study. Where the professors and examiners keep up a high standard, good work is done; but under incompetent teachers discipline disappears. University life is eaten through by the lawlessness, which breaks out every spring in periodic riots, and necessitates the closing of classes in more or fewer Universities. The perverse regulations, that the State has imposed on them, confine the subjects of examination to those taught in completed courses of lectures. If the students can succeed in getting a class closed before the end of term, there

is one less subject to be examined in. And very thoroughly they carry out the programme. Any student may attend any course of lectures, and a professor suddenly finds his class invaded by a mob of young men determined to break it up. The police cannot enter without the consent of the Rector, and the Rector shrinks from action which seems to reflect on his own power to keep order. The class is closed by ministerial order, and the students triumph.

Middle-class education in Italy is profoundly unsatisfactory. Few things there are more painful than the cowardice which deters Ministers and Parliament from the drastic remedies that are needed to discipline the idle and unruly students. It is little wonder that many middle-class parents prefer the clerical schools, where, at all events, the boys are educated and disciplined. The secondary schools and Universities are crowded with boys and young men intent on passing the examinations with a minimum of exertion. The smattering of culture that they give unfits the students for any life save that of the liberal professions and Civil Service. Men, who in England would go into business and be trained for it, here swell the ranks of the educated unemployed. Every year the Universities turn out 500 lawyers, 500 doctors, 50 engineers. Every successful tradesman hopes to see his son a lawyer or doctor or civil servant, and spends £300 to £500 in educating him for a useless life. It is impossible for many men to make a living in the overcrowded professions; and the majority, who can earn little or nothing, turn for bread to the one calling open to them and clamour

for Government appointments. They and their parents put remorseless pressure on the Deputies, and a Ministry knows it can hold so many constituencies, if it creates a sufficient number of unnecessary posts. Even then there is a large residuum, who cannot find employment. At a recent Post Office examination there were 3400 candidates, including several graduates, for 150 places. These are the men who make the really dangerous class of Italian society—critics of all things good or bad, agitators of the baser sort, disposed to go over in mass to the Socialists, but only hurting the cause by the spirit of egotism and insubordination which they introduce. Few things are more urgently needed in Italy than a reform of secondary and university education, to introduce discipline, to discourage the mere diploma-hunter, to make the Gymnasiums and Lyceums dearer, and the technical and modern schools cheaper. But even then there remains the more difficult task of changing middle-class ideals. "We must persuade people," says an Italian writer, "that a foreman or a good artisan is worth more socially and economically than a Post Office clerk or a civil servant." An honest Government may do much; the industrial expansion may do more. But it is a long row to hoe.

CHAPTER XIII

CHURCH AND STATE

The "Free Church in a Free State." The Law of Guarantees. Religious education. Civil marriage. Church property. Church and State.

THE legal relations between Church and State are fixed by the Law of Guarantees, which in the main embodied Cavour's principle of a "Free Church in a Free State." Cavour's famous formula reversed the principles, which in medieval times and after had guided the Governments of Italy and Catholic Europe. The system of concordats had given Catholicism the dignity and emoluments of a State Church, but left it little liberty. In the tradition of the bureaucrats the clergy were to be hardly more than a branch of the Civil Service, which should train the masses to dutiful obedience and be the Government's spiritual police. The conception was repugnant to Cavour's uncompromising Liberalism. In the Church, as in all else, he wanted freedom, life, initiative. He would have surrendered all the small devices, which the State had invented to bind the Church—its right to negative the Pope's canonic discipline, its control over the Church's property, the nomination of bishops, the veto on the meeting of synods, the penalties that punished abuse of spiritual arms. But in his plan the freedom of the Church was to be bartered for the surrender of the Temporal

Power, and there was a moment when he nearly drove the bargain. When Cavour died and the Vatican rallied from the blows of 1860, his successors saw that this was an impossible hope; but none the less the statesmen, who continued the Cavourian tradition, still believed, that whatever the attitude of the Vatican towards the Temporal Power, it was best for the State and best for religion that the Church should be free. Accordingly, after the capture of Rome, the Law of Guarantees was passed with many misgivings on the part of men like Sella, who feared that the Church would use its new liberties to the injury of the State, and that the State would be bound in self-defence to recover some of the rights it was giving away. The second part of the Law of Guarantees promised the Pope full freedom in the exercise of his spiritual ministry, and in his correspondence with the bishops. The State surrendered its right to nominate bishops, exempted them from the oath of allegiance, and abandoned the *exequatur* and *placet*, which gave civil recognition to the acts of Pope and bishops, except provisionally so far as these related to the property of the Church. The Law annulled the ancient right to appeal to the civil courts against an ecclesiastic who abused his spiritual powers.

Sella's previsions have been largely fulfilled. The Law of Guarantees, so far as it relates to the position of the Church, attempted the impossible. It tried to define in a very brief law the respective provinces of Church and State, with small forethought for the numberless points of detail, that fill the vast border-

land between the civil and spiritual. It has offered a constant temptation to anti-clericals, sometimes with, sometimes without just cause, to minimise the liberties it gave. The same angry controversy, which has raged over that part of the Law which fixes the Pope's position, extends to the rest; and while recognizing the exceeding difficulty of applying a few general principles to complicated questions of detail, we are bound to ask whether the State has fairly observed the spirit of its own law. The provisional retention of the *exequatur* and *placet* for the possession of benefices still remains, for the redistribution of clerical incomes, with which it was to cease, has bristled with too many difficulties to be carried out. There is no disloyalty in this, but the Catholics urge that the spirit of the Law has been ignored, and that the State constantly delays or refuses an *exequatur* without due cause. The apologists of the Government reply that the *exequatur* has only been refused for the reason, which has in all times prompted the Italian and other States to retain the right, namely, to exclude from posts of power persons notoriously hostile to the State, or to protect clerics punished by the Church for their support of the State; that where it has been delayed, it has been for good cause, and that in either case the revenues of the vacant benefice must by law be scrupulously applied to ecclesiastical purposes. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two, but there can be no doubt that the State has sometimes used the *exequatur* as a political or even as an electioneering weapon. Two other questions of interpretation illustrate the

inherent difficulties and contradictions of the Law. In one breath it abolishes the old power of the civil courts to decide in cases of abuse of spiritual authority ; in the next it allows the courts to take cognizance of any spiritual acts, which are opposed to the laws of the State or injurious to public order or the rights of individuals. In accordance with the latter clause, the Penal Code of 1889 increases the penalties of a priest, who excites to disobedience or contempt of the law, who, for instance, refuses the sacraments for any but purely spiritual reasons. It is obvious how impossible it is to clearly define what is and what is not a spiritual act, and how completely the concession of the Law of Guarantees may be eaten away. Again, the Law surrenders the right of the State to nominate to bishoprics, but it retains the patronage of the Crown. Now the Italian Crown inherits from the old Governments the patronage to all the bishoprics of Piedmont, Sardinia, and Sicily, and the majority of those of Modena and the ex-kingdom of Naples. It is impossible for the Government to accept the Pope's contention that a king, who is hostile to the Church, is canonically disqualified from exercising patronage, but the Catholics can justly argue that the surrender of the right of nomination is largely illusory. It is still more contrary to the spirit of the Law, when the State punishes a bishop for political opposition. When the Bishop of Adria last year flaunted his hostility on the occasion of King Humbert's funeral service, the Government deprived him of his income and distributed it among the poor priests of his diocese.

On the whole, one is bound to conclude that the Government has stretched the Law of Guarantees in its own interest, but that the brevity and incompleteness of the Law is chiefly responsible for the difficulties in construing it. How far it is from solving the relations of Church and State may be seen in the legislation—almost always the subject of bitter controversy—which has been passed since 1870 to regulate the status of the clergy, or settle the various questions that lie across the frontier between the civil and ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastical tithes have been finally abolished by the law of 1887, saving the rights of living beneficiaries. The *confraternità*, semi-ecclesiastical bodies for charitable purposes, may, under the Charities Law, have their funds appropriated for poor-relief. The number of feast-days has been diminished in official recognition, though there are still eighteen besides Sundays. The law of 1869, which made seminarists liable to serve as conscripts, still remains, though they are now generally attached to hospital or ambulance corps, and must be so in time of war. Charities have been taken almost entirely out of the hands of the clergy by the law of 1890.

There are the still more burning questions of religious education and civil marriage. Under the Education Law of 1859, the presumption was that all children attended classes in scripture and catechism, though parents, who themselves undertook their children's religious education, might claim exemption. By a royal decree of 1888, without any Act of Parliament, the presumption has been shifted, and the

local authority is now not bound to provide religious teaching, unless the parents demand it. In practice, however, religious instruction in catechism and sacred history was given in 1897 in 6000 communes (out of 8260), and the figures seem to show that it is the general rule in the larger schools. At Bergamo the attendance is so general, that the commune finds it more convenient to assume that all children will attend, and thus practically reverts to the old law. There has no doubt been a certain tendency to exclude priests from the schools, from a fear that they may attack the State under colour of religious teaching, or employ the catechism to instil illiberal principles. But out of 30,000 teachers who give religious instruction, 3000 are ecclesiastics. The Education Code allows communes to entrust it to outsiders approved by the Provincial Council of Education, and under this power priests are often admitted. At Brescia and Verona and Venice the Council allows the bishop to nominate priests for the purpose. At Milan, if the lay teacher is unwilling to undertake religious instruction, it is given by priests appointed by the local authority and according to a scheme laid down by it. At Imola and Lodi the priest teaches, but the schoolmaster or mistress has to be present to keep order. It is complained that clerical managers give an undue share of the time-table to the subject. In a certain number of schools, especially in Piedmont, the school teacher is already a priest, and still more often a nun, and the courts have expressly ruled that there is no legal impediment to this. The crucifix still hangs in every

school. The question seems to be losing some of its acuteness. On the one hand the Catholic Congress bitterly complains that parents are indifferent to it; in the current school year at Milan, hardly more than half have claimed it for their children.¹ On the other hand there is less feeling in the country and Parliament against its being given by priests, and a Deputy recently suggested in the Chamber that it should be so given in all cases. The Council of State has even suggested a return to the law of 1859.

The marriage law still excites a good deal of acrimonious feeling. The Civil Code recognizes civil marriage only, and allows no legal validity to marriages performed with the religious rite alone. But there are still a great, though probably a decreasing, number of the latter, partly from religious scruples, partly because it forms an easy cloak for seduction and subsequent desertion. The result is that wives are abandoned without any civil remedy, that widows cannot claim their husbands' pensions, that there are a large number of children born in wedlock but illegitimate in the eyes of the law. In 1878 seventeen per cent. of the births in the province of Rome were illegitimate; even last year it was reported that there were 14,000 unrecognized marriages in the province of Ancona. No doubt the influence of the priests is much to blame, but in at least one diocese the bishop prohibits his clergy from celebrating marriage, except after

¹ At the present moment (February 1901) the Clericalists of Milan are agitating to have prayers in the elementary schools, to be held outside the time given to religious instruction.

the civil rite, and very recently the Holy Office has advised priests, as a rule, to marry persons only when they are satisfied that the civil ceremony has been or will be very shortly performed. The obvious remedies would appear to be the enactment of a bastardy law (the absence of which is a crying scandal), and the assimilation of the marriage law to that of England. But Parliament seems to see no remedy except in penalizing the religious rite, when unaccompanied by the civil act. Two rival schemes have been recently before the Senate. The milder project, brought forward by the Pelloux Government, required that civil marriage should be performed either before or within ten days after the religious rite. The more stringent proposals would have made the precedence of the civil rite obligatory. Both Bills would have inflicted penalties alike on the married persons and the priest, when a religious marriage took place contrary to the terms of the law. The milder scheme was carried by a small majority in the Senate, but would probably have no chance of passing the Chamber.

In curious contrast to the Free Church policy, the State still keeps a very large control over the administration of Church property. When the monasteries and other ecclesiastical foundations were finally dissolved in 1866-67, a general settlement was made of the revenues of the Church. Parish benefices, whose annual value is nearly £1,000,000, were left untouched. Other ecclesiastical corporations that survived the dissolution—bishoprics, cathedral chapters, seminaries, endowments for the maintenance of church fabrics or for

ecclesiastical education and preaching—were compelled to surrender their capital to the State, which was to sell their real property and pay annually to each corporation 5 per cent. on its estimated value, after deducting three-tenths on the plea that the State inherited the share that had gone to education and charity, and after levying a heavy and graduated toll for the benefit of the general Ecclesiastical Fund. This now represents an annual sum of about £1,000,000. The property of the suppressed monasteries and other foundations passed also to the State, which in this case, too, was to sell the realty. The State, after deducting the same three-tenths and 5 per cent. for management, was to pay to an Ecclesiastical Fund (*fondo per il culto*) 5 (now 4½) per cent. on the estimated value of the property, together with the value of rent-charges and other sources of income belonging to the suppressed foundations. The Fund was destined to pay pensions to the dispossessed monks and nuns and other clerics, to take the place of all ecclesiastical charges on the State and communes, to contribute to the repair of the fabric of churches and cathedrals, and to increase the stipends of the poorer clergy. When these claims were satisfied, any balance was to go to the State and communes. The settlement was a compromise between those who claimed all Church property as a sacred and inalienable estate, and those who regarded it as a national fund to be legitimately used for any public purpose.

If one may draw any conclusion from complicated and apparently contradictory figures, the fund has been

honestly administered. The properties realised less than was expected, and, including the few that still remain to be sold, have proved to be worth a little over £26,000,000. The Treasury pays annually to the Fund $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on about £10,000,000, and about £250,000 for the rent charges and other dues that it collects in its name. The £10,000,000 is calculated to represent the proportion of the proceeds, which under the law of 1867 belongs to the Fund; but an estimate, which we give with reserve, calculates that the State, when it has met all expenses of management and allowed for its liabilities, has gained less than £6,000,000, or about 22 per cent. instead of the 30 per cent. that it promised itself. The *Fondo per il culto* is heavily in debt to it, to an amount probably not much short of £3,000,000. The communes are still unrelieved of their ecclesiastical charges, which amount to £140,000 annually; much less have they, except in Sicily, had any share of the residue. And though the State has appropriated £1,100,000 of its share of the residue, it has allowed the Fund to assist the poorer priests on a more generous scale than was at first intended. The Fund is indeed paid a lower rate of interest than was promised to it, but it shares this fate with the other holders in Italian funds. Its total income is about £850,000. A steadily increasing amount goes to raise the stipends of the poorer priests and bishops. How urgent is the need is proved by the fact that 17 per cent. of the parish priests had incomes under £20. The Fund has gradually increased the minimum, till it stands now at £36, and is to be raised

to £40.¹ The minimum stipend of a bishop is made up to £240. As the poor priests benefit from the toll on the incomes of bishoprics and richer benefices (no bishop is allowed more than £1266), the Fund is doing much to equalise the incomes of the clergy. There is some desire among the democratic parties to do this more thoroughly, and a sweeping scheme has been recently suggested. It is calculated that if the glebes were sold and the proceeds handed over to the Fund, and if at the same time the number of dioceses (258, besides those of Rome) and parishes were reduced, there would be enough to give every incumbent £40 to £60, and leave an annual sum of £440,000 to pay small stipends to the 66,000 miserably poor non-beneficed clergy. The figures have been criticized, and badly as the glebe-lands are farmed, there are grave social objections to their sale. A priest, who farms or lets his own glebe, is more interested in the prosperity of the country, is a better neighbour and a better citizen, than one who draws his income from a distant, impersonal fund. As M. de Laveleye put it, it is better that he should spend his winter evenings in thinking about his manures and fat calves than in brooding over the greatness of the Church. In any case, wise or unwise, local sentiment and the opposition of the Vatican probably make any further redistribution scheme impossible for the present.

Thus the Church in Italy lives under a strangely

¹ Law of June 4, 1899. From information collected by us in the South, it seems that some priests still have not had their stipends raised to the legal minimum.

mixed rule of freedom and State control. The clergy are to a large extent State-paid. The poorer priests look to the Government for any increase in their miserable stipends; and in parts of Italy most promotion is in the hands of the Government. On the other hand, the Church enjoys a liberty it never knew under the old system. In the old states, in United Italy up to 1870, "no bishop might go to Rome without permission of the Government, the seminaries had to submit their curriculum, the State could regulate the teaching of the catechism, the ringing of the church bells, even the number of candles lighted on the altar." This has all gone now. And on the whole the system is accepted on both sides. The Clericalists, it is true, would like to see the *exequatur* and *placet* removed, charities partly at least in the hands of the priests, religious education made compulsory, some compromise effected on civil marriage. The survivors of the Erastian school call for stricter enforcement of the *exequatur* and *placet*, for a reduction in the number of sees, for some regulation of synods, for recognition and regulation of the new monastic bodies. But here, as with the Papal question, the *status quo* is likely to last for many years to come. Moderate men dread new religious controversy; importunate social questions more and more absorb the time of Parliament. There may be minor changes, but Italy is not likely to see in this generation any sweeping changes in the relations that rule to-day between Church and State.

CHAPTER XIV

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local life. Local Government Law. Government and the communes.
Local finance. Abuses. Municipalization of services.

LOCAL government has a more than usual importance in Italy. Municipal life has still much of its historic strength, and when Gino Capponi called Tuscany "an aggregate of communes," he expressed what is more or less true of the whole country. "Often," says a recent writer, "the blood of the middle ages runs in the veins of our communes." To many of the Southern Italians the commune is everything and the State is very little; the commune and its doings and its struggles make a big part of his life, while the far-off Government at Rome vanishes to a speck. The peasant, who will not trouble to vote at a Parliamentary election, cares much to be a village councillor, and in 1889 there were 19,000 farmers or agricultural labourers and 12,000 artisans, who sat in the coveted seat of communal government. The provincial city clings to the glory that has come down from the days of its medieval independence; some were till yesterday the capitals of their little states. Italy has no true metropolis to suck the life of the country to itself. Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Naples, Palermo rival or surpass Rome

in manufactures and commerce, in literary and artistic activity, in journalism, in social brilliancy, in their influence on the country's general life. They have their factories, their theatres, their newspapers, their publishers, their exhibitions, which Rome can barely equal. Take a little town like Modena, with a population of 31,000, and we find in it a University, a great Military School, an Academy of Fine Arts, two large Libraries, and a Court of Appeal, besides its own municipal activities.

Nor is there any sign that this social decentralization is diminishing. Unity has centralized the administration and to a certain extent political life; it has centralized nothing else. Climate and geography at present forbid Rome to become a great capital like London or Paris or Berlin. Were Parliamentary life more real, the interest of the country would gravitate more there; but in its present discredit and congestion, municipal reform is the most hopeful channel of social advance, and Italians assert with some exaggeration that all the best public life of the country lies in the municipalities. Certainly in some of the cities there has been of late years a very notable development of municipal activity. But the urgency of local politics lies in the intimate connection between municipal finance and the people's food. The local duties make a big part of the burden of taxation that is crushing the poor. The price of bread and meat, of wine and sugar and coffee, of eggs and cheese and fish, depends to a large extent on the municipal policy of each town. It is this that makes the starving and despairing peasant of the South

revolt against his Communal Council, and not against the Government.¹

The Local Government of Italy, which has changed but little since 1865, does small credit to Italian legislative ability. Perhaps from a concession to a doctrinaire equality, perhaps from sheer lack of constructive capacity, the Italian law gives much the same powers and duties to every commune, large and small. In their relations with the central Government there is little difference between a city of half a million inhabitants and a tiny Alpine hamlet. The great city is subject to irritating and unnecessary interference; the little town or village has powers altogether beyond its capacity, and which only tempt it to extravagance. Each of the 8262 communes has its Council of fifteen to eighty members, according to its size, elected by literates on a lower qualification than the Parliamentary franchise. The term of office is for six years, and one-half of the members go out of office every three years. The Council has only two statutory meetings in the year (though, of course, in the large towns it meets oftener), and in the intervals its work is carried on by a small Junta, which acts as an executive committee to carry out in detail the resolutions of the Council, and draft its budget and bye-laws. Every commune has a Syndic for its chief officer, appointed by the Council for three years, and a Secretary, appointed in the first instance for two years and afterwards for periods of not less than six; in all but the smaller communes a person to be eligible for the latter post

¹ See above, p. 89.

must, as a rule, have passed through a Lyceum and Technical Institute. Except for electoral purposes, there is no local area corresponding to the English district or French *arrondissement*; in some parts of Italy the communes are themselves districts, each containing several towns or villages. There are sixty-nine provinces, with an average population of about 450,000, each with its machinery analogous to that of the commune—a Council of twenty to sixty members, elected on the same franchise and for the same period, and meeting once a year, nominally, at all events, for a month's session; a Deputation corresponding to the Communal Junta;¹ and a Prefect appointed by the Government, who is assisted by a Provincial Junta of six members, of whom four are appointed by the Council. It will be seen that a large amount of power necessarily passes to the Communal Junta and Provincial Delegation, and their influence is probably greater than that of the Committees of an English local body.

The powers of the Councils are very wide. The compulsory duties of the Communal Councils include the maintenance of streets, communal roads,² lighting (where there is any), and markets; all sanitary matters and the provision of burial grounds; elementary education and certain duties in respect of secondary education;³ the relief of the poor and a general control

¹ Members of the Deputation not resident in the chief town of the province may, at the option of the Council, be paid an allowance not exceeding 8s. for each meeting and travelling expenses. Members of the Provincial Junta are paid 8s. to 12s. for each meeting.

² Communal, provincial, and national roads are respectively 54, 39, and 7 per cent. of the whole.

³ See above, pp. 245, 246.

of local charities;¹ local police and prisons; registration of births and deaths; electoral registration; certain duties in sea-towns in respect of ports and lighthouses; and the maintenance of the fabric of churches, where no other sufficient means are forthcoming. The compulsory duties of the Provincial Councils include the maintenance of provincial roads; the control of river channels and embankments; most secondary and technical education; the maintenance of pauper lunatics; and certain supervisory powers over elementary education and charities. But beyond these compulsory duties, both communes and provinces have almost unlimited permissive powers. Subject to the Prefect's veto, they may undertake any "services or offices of public utility." These often include necessary objects of municipal enterprise. But it means, too, that a commune sometimes spends more money on its theatre than on its schools,² or delights a Southern populace on fête-days with costly illuminations and explosion of petards in the streets at no small risk to the limbs of the crowd and the tottering houses. £1200 is spent on one piece of fireworks to make a Roman holiday. Impecunious local bodies encourage music and the fine arts, have universities without scholars, secondary schools without apparatus, "museums and picture galleries with hardly a local reputation." It is true that the permissive expenditure accounts for only

¹ See above, pp. 220, 221, 223.

² Palermo has spent £360,000 in building two theatres and £20,000 in building new schools, for which there is an urgent need. It is worth noting that when the Milan municipality stopped the subsidy to La Scala, a public agitation compelled them to restore it.

£2,500,000 out of a total local expenditure of £22,000,000, but in the Sicilian communes it covers more than one-fifth, and at the best it is a sum that poverty-stricken Italy can ill afford.

Various minor cures have been suggested, but the obvious and only effective remedy would be to differentiate between the larger and smaller communes and limit the powers of the latter. In place of this simple principle, which has solved the difficulty in England, the Italians have an irritating and cumbersome system of bureaucratic checks. The Prefect is a nominee and officer of the Crown. In the great majority of communes it is only since 1896 that the Syndic has been elective, and he is still not only executive officer of the commune, but a Government official, who during his three years of office can only be removed by permission of the Prefect or for "serious reasons of public order." Neither Prefect nor Syndic can be called to account except by his superiors, or sued save by permission of the Crown—a principle which, however general outside Anglo-Saxon countries, is a grave and standing threat to public liberty. The Prefect and the Provincial Junta have large, and, to a considerable extent, discretionary powers over the resolutions and finances of both Communal and Provincial Councils. There are very weighty objections to the system. It is intolerable that great cities like Milan and Turin should be subordinated to anything less than a Government Department, that they should be at the mercy of an official who, however capable he may be and sometimes is, is a mere local functionary. Like Government

Auditors in England, different Prefects may adopt quite diverse standards, and their powers are much wider than those of our Auditors. Perhaps it is even more galling that a small Provincial Junta, representing a district practically dependent on the great city, should be able to override the municipal resolutions. There is a still graver stumbling-block in the Prefect's small reputation for impartiality. He is not only an administrative officer, he is the political agent of the Government; and his political attributes unfit him for any work that requires judicial qualities. If the Government orders him, as it sometimes does, to act illegally towards a commune, he has no option but to obey. The average Prefect represents the prejudices of the ruling classes, and he has seldom much tenderness for Municipal Socialism in any of its forms. Even a Moderate, like Signor Vigoni, the ex-Syndic of Milan, complains bitterly of the official opposition to municipal reform. At Novara the Prefect last year cut out eight-ninths of the sum appropriated by the municipality for the feeding of poor school-children. At Reggio-Emilia his Council quashed the letting of communal land to a Cooperative Society. Two Syndics were suspended last year for permitting official celebrations of the First of May; a Clericalist Syndic was prosecuted for altering the name of a street from "Settembre XX."¹ Among the many Communal Councils that are dissolved every year, the offence is sometimes that they have a Socialist majority or have made themselves unpleasant to the local Deputy. An Under-Secretary in the Home Office

¹ The date of the capture of Rome in 1870.

lately had a Communal Council dissolved in his own constituency, for supporting the opposition candidate. No doubt the Prefect's interference is often prompted by the partisan central Government. But it were better that the communes should deal directly even with an Italian Government Department than with an irresponsible and often bigoted official. During the last year or two, as the sense of municipal responsibility has spread, a strong movement has been growing up to free the communes from the tutelage alike of Prefect and central Government, and find a better safeguard against extravagance in a municipal referendum. A "Communes' League" is making headway, and though many of the larger cities hold aloof and the Government has done its best to check it, it is likely to make itself felt in the near future.

But crass and obstructive as the whole system is, its main social gravity lies in its financial aspect. It is not that either local taxation or indebtedness reach to very imposing figures. The total local expenditure is £22,000,000, or about 14s. per head; the indebtedness in 1896 was over £54,000,000, or £1. 15s. per head, but the valuable communal properties, largely in landed estates, amount to as much.¹ The evil lies in that the communes have copied the State only too faithfully in throwing the burden of taxation on the poor; and the State has made the problem graver by appropriating sources of communal income for its own benefit, while it is ever imposing fresh duties on them,

¹ In Great Britain in 1895-96 the local receipts were £75,000,000 and the indebtedness £242,000,000.

and its grants-in-aid are hardly appreciable. At present the two chief resources of the communes are a tax on land and buildings (*sovrimposta*), which is practically equivalent to our rates, and the local duties (*dazio consumo*) on food and other articles.¹ The former, though in the rural communes it bears hardly on the small farmer, at all events reaches the property-owners in the towns. By the letter of the law it may not exceed a half of the State's land-tax, unless no other funds are forthcoming to enable a commune to execute its statutory duties; but as a matter of fact, the limit is exceeded in the majority of communes, and in seventy-four it is more than five times as high as the State's tax, though perhaps in these cases the assessment is a very low one. While the rates are comparatively free from objection, the *dazio consumo* is a terrible tax on food. Every commune may impose a duty on flour, bread, and maccaroni up to 10, or in certain cases 15 per cent. of value; on meat up to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb., on wine up to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon; on almost every other kind of food or drink (except those mentioned below), on soap, paper, firing, forage, building materials, and furniture up to 20 per cent. of value. The "closed communes" (as a rule those with a population exceeding 8000) may impose in addition duties on sugar up to nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb., on butter up to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb., and on paraffin up to nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. In the "open" communes (with populations under 8000) the communal

¹ Space does not permit us to refer to the other local taxes. A good deal may be found respecting them in the *Annuario statistico italiano* for 1900, pp. 1022, 1023, and *Critica Sociale* for Jan. 1 and Feb. 1, 1900.

duty is not severe, and in 1897 amounted to less than 9d. per head. But in the 336 closed communes, with a population of about 6,600,000, it amounted to over 16s. per head. At Genoa it reaches £1. 16s. per head, the heaviest local duty outside Paris, it is said, in Europe. And its incidence inevitably falls mainly on the poor. Careful inquiries made by the Socialists at Turin and Palermo go to show that at both places, while the average working man pays nearly 4 per cent. of his income in local duties, the tradesman with an income of £220 pays 1.4 per cent., and the *rentier* with an income of £750 pays .5 per cent.

Rates and *dazio consumo* make up two-thirds of local income, and the test of a commune's care for its poor may be found in their relative proportion. On the whole of the country the duties are only slightly heavier than the rates. But in Sicily the duties are more than twice, and in the South generally nearly twice as high. At Turin in 1898 the rates reached only to one-quarter of the duties; at Palermo they are at the present time less than a seventh. The disturbances of 1898 led to a vigorous agitation for the reduction of the duties, and to some extent it has borne fruit. A law of that year has offered certain inducements to the communes to repeal the duty on flour and bread, and other Bills, going further in the same direction, have been introduced since then.¹ At Bologna and Bergamo the duty has been

¹ The Zanardelli Cabinet proposes (March 1901) to make all communes "open" which have a smaller population than 20,000; this leaves only sixty-two "closed" communes. It proposes further to abolish the local duties on bread, flour, and macaroni in all except these sixty-two communes; the State is to make grants-in-aid to the value of £740,000 towards the total

abolished. It is no doubt doomed in all the more progressive municipalities. But the problem how to supply the deficit is a very thorny one. Little can be raised from most of the minor sources of income. The tax on dwelling-houses (*valore locativo*) is too unpopular to be largely adopted. Where the rates are low, they might be increased with advantage, but in many towns they have already reached a maximum. The impoverished national exchequer cannot at present make grants-in-aid substantial enough to meet the case of the large towns. Some new local tax must be found, whose incidence will fall on the rich, and on personalty in particular. In England personalty contributes indirectly to local expenditure through the grants-in-aid from the Imperial Exchequer. In Italy it contributes nothing. Up to 1891 the communes were allowed to impose a small income-tax, and men of different parties have advocated a power to reimpose it; but, unless it is made progressive, its incidence on small incomes, as imposed by the State, is already too heavy to permit of any increase. Some Socialists have suggested a severely graduated family tax, with exemption for the poor. At present the rich are greatly under-taxed. At Turin a family with an income of £40 pays 4.4 per cent. in all kinds of local taxation, while one with an income of £760 pays 1.1 per cent.

Till this is done, till the wealthier classes are made to feel the burden of local taxation themselves, the

loss of £1,880,000, which will be incurred by the communes. The law, if passed, is to come into effect at the beginning of 1902. The Government promises to ultimately repeal the local duty on flour in the closed communes as well.

dazio consumo will be "the *deus ex machina* for every commune that spends more than it ought."¹ It is this more than anything else that has made it so easy for the middle classes to exploit local government in their own interest, and in parts of the South has made it a mere instrument to plunder the poor. The same struggle for existence in the middle classes, which has done so much to corrupt the central government, has led to the creation of a host of unnecessary posts under the communes. In the worst days of municipal corruption at Naples, there was one employee to every hundred inhabitants. Sometimes, especially in the South, there are yet graver scandals. Roads are often made at the communal expense for the benefit of individuals. A Sicilian commune levied a special rate on land, but exempted all proprietors of more than forty acres. At Palermo a local official put four sons in an orphanage. M. Laveleye quotes the case of a ruined *grand seigneur*, Syndic of his town and an influential Deputy, who gave official banquets and dined at the best restaurants, his caterers not daring to send in their bills. The local government of Naples has long been in the hands of a small faction in league with the *camorra*, which plays into the hands of the companies, to whom it has made over electric light and water and tramways. But there is not plunder enough for all the hungry bourgeois, and the fight for bread gives new zest to the hereditary feuds of the small towns. The spoils are to the victors, and, especially since 1876, each shifting of the communal majority means the loss of office to the friends

¹ This will be less possible now, if the Zanardelli Bill becomes law.

of the vanquished party. In a Sicilian commune not long ago the party in power paid no *dazio consumo*; and in parts of the island it is a recognised custom that those who are in persecute, and occasionally murder, those who are out.

Where these elementary abuses exist, municipal development is impossible. But in the North, and here and there in the South, healthier conditions prevail. There is considerable interest in Municipal Socialism, and some careful study of its development in England and France. The Socialists and progressive Catholics have wisely recognized that at present the municipalities are the best field for their activities. All the democratic parties favour municipalization more or less, not only in the public services, but in the supply of bread. Even the Moderates in towns like Milan and Bologna are prepared to go a long way. In the taking over of public services, in the improvement of the condition of municipal employees, in the erection of workmen's dwellings, in providing free meals for school children, something has already been done. Bologna has recently municipalized its gas; at Turin there are public baths, and the Socialists and Clericalists here have carried a resolution to insert clauses in municipal contracts for a minimum wage and maximum working-day; Rome has made its Tramways Company reduce the hours of drivers and conductors; Reggio-Emilia has started an information office for emigrants; Cremona is taking over a flourishing cooperative bakery for municipal working. At Venice the Commune has cooperated

with the Savings Bank in erecting workmen's dwellings. But the best work has been done at Milan, owing in part to Socialist pressure, but carried out by the Moderate majority, before it was ousted two years ago. All the tram lines belong to the municipality; most of them are leased for ten years, but the Council retains considerable powers of control, and takes a rental of £288 per mile and 60 per cent. of the net profits. This in 1899 brought in £40,000, or 25 per cent. on the capital sunk by the municipality. There are halfpenny trams in the morning for workmen, school-teachers, and school-children; 35,000 halfpenny tickets and 145,000 at higher prices are sold every day. The Council itself works a tram line to the cemetery, and takes hearses and mourners free of charge. The gas mains belong to them, and they have made the private company that supplies the gas reduce its charges by over £50,000 a year. There is a municipal water supply, which makes a fair profit; there are municipal slaughter-houses and public baths, the latter being visited in the summer months by 2000 persons a day. The city is now preparing to quarry its own paving-stones. The total expenses of its government are over £900,000.

CHAPTER XV

FINANCE

The National Debt. Railways and the State. Public Works. Need of Economy. Economies on the Army and Debt.

THE financial question is at the bottom of half the difficulty in Italy. The country is weighed down by taxation because the State has undertaken burdens beyond its strength. There is no money, where money is urgently needed—for education, for agricultural and industrial development—because the resources of the country are already hypothecated. But for her national debt, Italy would be lightly taxed. Without the charges on it, the national expenditure reaches only to £38,000,000, or about £1. 4s. per head. Italy has been a spendthrift, and has piled a terrible mortgage on her future. There was an excuse for it in the sixties, when the young kingdom had to “spend and spend,” in order to assert her position as a civilized country and give her industries and agriculture a chance of development. It was a mad statesmanship, when, after the temporary cessation of deficits from 1875 to 1881, there came another period of reckless finance, which has only ceased within the last three years. In 1871 the debt was £323,000,000, in 1899 it was £516,000,000, and

the charges on it reached £27,500,000,¹ a portentous figure for so poor a country.

It is true that this debt is not all a dead loss. Over £160,000,000 has been spent in railways. Between 1886 and 1892 the expenditure went up to over £7,000,000 a year, and in one year reached nearly £12,000,000. Since then it has been materially curtailed, and of late has averaged less than £1,000,000. It has been a very unremunerative outlay. The State's interest in the railways (two-thirds of which belong to it) has been recently valued at £48,000,000, so that £112,000,000 have been sunk without return. In addition to this, the State guarantees 5 per cent. on the working capital of the lines, and this, according to Signor Bodio's figures (after allowing for various charges on the railways), means a net loss to the State of 1 per cent., or about £1,600,000 a year. Whether from a larger point of view the outlay has repaid, is a more difficult question. No doubt private enterprise would sooner or later have built the trunk lines, but many of the smaller railways would not have been constructed without the assistance of the State. That they have done good is indisputable. They have broken down provincial isolation and ignorance; they have improved the habits of the people; they have brought new life to backward districts. It is more questionable whether the good has been proportionate to the cost. Sometimes the local agriculture is not sufficiently advanced to profit by them. They have

¹ Including about £3,600,000 in annuities, terminable for the most part between 1944 and 1985.

often, it is probable, been constructed at an extravagant expense, often built to content the importunities of Senators and Deputies more than to meet real needs. It is equally difficult to say whether the connection between the railways and the State is a healthy one. From 1876 to 1885 the State managed most of the railways itself. In 1885 they were leased for sixty years, with power for either party to terminate the contract at the end of each twenty years, but they still remain very largely under State control. The rates, the price of tickets, the status of the railwaymen, every important expenditure, are all subject to the control of the Minister of Public Works and ultimately of Parliament. Under a better administration the public and the employees would both gain largely. As things are now, it probably works for harm. The companies, it is said, look for increased subsidies rather than make an effort to economize. It has been estimated that 16,000 out of the staff of 86,000 on the chief lines are unnecessary. How unsatisfactory is the working of the railways, every traveller in Italy knows to his cost. High railway rates impede trade, scarcity of rolling stock congests the traffic, the slowness and unpunctuality of the ordinary trains, the absence of third-class carriages on expresses, the high passenger fares¹ make their management a by-word. The State may

¹ But a very large proportion can claim half-price tickets. The list includes civil servants, journalists, school-teachers, doctors, theatrical companies, officers of charitable societies, working-men's societies, electors going to the poll, persons going to any congress, jurymen, exhibitors going to any exhibition, scrofulous persons and paupers going to a bathing institution! Deputies have free passes.

denounce the existing conventions in 1905, and public opinion will probably insist that the terms of the leases shall be largely modified, as the price of prolonging them.

£63,000,000 were spent between 1862 and 1897 on public works—roads, river-courses, canals, reclamation of land, ports and lighthouses, and coast works. Most of this was probably inevitable. Large districts of the South were practically without roads; a million acres of fertile soil still wait to be reclaimed; a land of rapid rivers must needs spend much on their embankments; vast works were needed to make the ports fit for modern commerce. But much, too, has been wasted. Money has been spent unnecessarily and extravagantly for purposes of political bribery. £2,000,000 have gone to the “transformation” of Rome, and monstrous and half-empty piles are built for Government offices and Law Courts there, that the city may pose as a great capital, or lest perchance the Romans should say, “These Piedmontese cannot even put up a decent building.” Conservatives and Radicals alike have paltered to crude theories of State Socialism, to the self-destructive policy of spending taxes to find work for the unemployed. Of late, however, the expenditure on public works has been sensibly cut down, and now averages £1,600,000.

Thus more than two-fifths of the debt has been incurred for purposes which were largely necessary, and which at all events were intended to be directly or indirectly reproductive. £90,000,000, or more than one-sixth, were taken over from the suppressed states or from Piedmont in the days when it was making Italy.

The Venetian War, and the inevitable military expenditure that preceded it, accounts for perhaps £50,000,000 more. For the remaining £150,000,000 the military and colonial policy of the last twenty years is mainly responsible.

Public opinion is now fully alive to the gravity of the position, and insistent that there shall be no more deficits, no more additions to the terrible weight of debt. And chaotic as is the management of Italian finance, incapable as Parliament has seemed of any wise or helpful criticism of the Budget, it is probable that, apart from the contingency of war, serious deficits will not recur. But public opinion, as is shown by the debates on the present Budget, is already beginning to insist that, cost what it may, the worst of the existing taxes shall be reduced. How then is the Budget to be balanced? Not at present from any natural expansion of revenue. Despite the improvement of trade, no single item of revenue shows any appreciable elasticity, though the receipts from the customs, stamps, the post-office, and railways show a slight tendency to improve. No doubt there is room for additional taxes on luxuries, for a progressive income-tax or succession-duty, but these are not likely at present to bring in any very substantial sum.¹ If taxes are to be reduced without adding to the debt, the reductions must be accompanied by economies. Where then is economy possible? Since 1895 the Italian Budget has stood pretty uniformly at about

¹ The Zanardelli Bill to graduate the succession-duty is estimated to bring in an additional £280,000.

£66,000,000. The expenditure (taking the figures of 1898-99) may be divided into five heads :—

Customs and Inland Revenue, out- goings of Lottery and of State monopolies of salt and tobacco	}	£6,600,000 or 10 per cent.		
Civil Services		13,500,000	20	„
Railways and Public Works		2,300,000	4	„
Army and Navy		15,700,000	24	„
Debt		27,500,000	42	„

Now it is clear at the outset that no great economy is possible on the first three heads. Without a radical change in Italian finance, the expenses of collection are bound to be heavy. Public works, so far as they are started to buy political support or find casual employment, may profitably disappear. But others are urgently needed, as, for instance, the various schemes for reclaiming land, or the great aqueduct which is shortly to be built to supply Apulia with drinking water, at a cost to State and local bodies of over £6,500,000. Nor is any great retrenchment possible in the civil services or allied expenditure, though the bounties may with advantage disappear, and there is room, no doubt, for many small economies. The number of civil servants is excessive, but their pay is very small. In some Departments there is urgent need for more money. Education is starved. Italian justice owes its ill repute largely to the fact that judges and magistrates are paid salaries that will not attract good men. Money is needed to fight malaria, to stamp out phylloxera and the olive pest, to cheapen postal rates, to improve the consular service, to protect emigrants, to make grants-in-aid to the communes, that will enable them to carry out

their educational and sanitary duties, and compensate them for the abolition of the local duties on food. Be it remembered that Italy could not afford her decennial census in 1891, that it cannot keep a single national library up to date, that priceless archives are rotting for want of store-room.

Any substantial economy then must come on the army and navy or on the public debt. The cost of the army and navy (including pensions) has on the average of 1896-99 been a little over £16,000,000 a year, of which the navy takes £4,300,000. It is a considerable reduction from the figures of ten years earlier, when the average cost was £19,000,000, but it is still out of all proportion to the wealth of the country. M. Delivet has shown that it takes a higher proportion of the private income of the country than in any other European State.¹ There is room, of course, here for a saving that would materially relieve the country. What probability is there of it? That the fleet must be kept up to at least its present strength is common ground with all parties. The coast of Italy is too vulnerable to be left defenceless, and even the Extreme Left do not attack the principle of a strong navy. Signor Crispi has recently appealed for a large increase in its force, and indeed it is probable that at present its efficiency is low. On the other hand, there has been a strong and persistent attack on the Army Budget. In the early nineties it came largely from individuals on the Right, as Count Jacini and Signor Colombo. Twice Di Rudinì when in office attempted to cut down the

¹ Italy 5.14, Spain 4.96, Russia 4.43, Germany 4.28, France 4.03.

Budget, but these and every attempt were defeated by the influence of the late King. The Extreme Left have consistently preached the substitution of a national militia for a standing army, and the lessons of the Transvaal war have strengthened their arguments. The proposal is outside practical politics for the present, but the criticism of the economists has so far reached its mark, that General Pelloux promised in the spring of last year to keep the normal Army Budget down to £9,560,000, exclusive of pensions (£1,400,000) and the cost of troops on foreign service. These figures have been adhered to in the Budget now before the Chamber; but the scheme allows some £700,000 from the sale of military lands and stores to be added to them,¹ and it pledges Parliament to certain expenditure, such as the arming of the artillery with quick-firing guns, which makes it very doubtful whether the limit can be adhered to in future Budgets. It is to be hoped, in the highest interests of Italy, that the retrenchment will go much farther. Her one prime need is to relieve her poverty, and no false national pride should weigh against that. Though it is an error to suppose that the terms of the Triple Alliance prescribe any particular military strength,² it makes none the less for a large and expensive army. And this being so, it is very difficult to justify it. Italy no doubt has her dangers from without, but for defensive purposes her wealth and her credit are more important

¹ It was on this point that the Radicals refused to join the Zanardelli Cabinet. See above, p. 109, *note*.

² See below, p. 299.

than any legions of half-trained soldiers. What are the prospects of a renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1903 we shall see in the next chapter. In the meantime we may note that there are a good many, outside as well as inside the Extreme Left, who would like, sooner or later, to economise at any cost, though at present the Radicals are satisfied with asking that the limit of £9,560,000 shall be rigidly and honestly observed. On the other hand, the influence of the army is strong, and politicians are afraid of seriously discontenting it. It is probable on the whole that there will be no heroic retrenchment, but the swelling cry for popular finance is likely to necessitate successive small inroads on the Army Budget, and though there is no statesmanship strong and wise enough to do all that should be done, the country may before long economise an appreciable sum on it.

There remains the cost of the Debt, which makes 42 per cent. of the whole national expenditure. According to M. Delivet's figures (after allowing for deduction of income-tax) the charges on the debt absorb over 8 per cent. of the whole private income of the country, a proportion which is exceeded only by Spain, and is nearly twice as high as in France, and four times higher than in England. The possibility of reducing them is the most momentous problem in Italian finance. Signor Flora has shown that in 1897 Italy was paying in interest £4. 4s. for every £100 of debt, while France was paying £2. 16s., Russia £3. 3s. 7d., and Austria £3. 16s. 6d. Can this figure be reduced? In 1894 Baron Sonnino, by raising the income-tax, practically reduced the interest on the nominal 5 per

cents. from £4. 6s. 9d. to £4, and it is notable that the funds went up in consequence, because his action was taken as meaning that the finances were being put on a proper footing, and that there was less danger of repudiation. If his action could be repeated, and the interest on the consolidated debt be reduced $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., it would save the Exchequer nearly £2,000,000 a year; and Signor Ferraris has calculated that, including the reduction of interest on local debts and commercial capital which would follow, the country would make an annual gain of over £6,000,000. If Italy could raise her credit to the level of that of France, there would be a probable saving to the Exchequer alone of £6,000,000 a year. Any conversion of the debt depends of course on the price of the funds and the premium on gold. The former has been steadily rising of late years. In 1886 the average price at Rome went up to 99.63; the commercial depression that began in 1888 brought it down rapidly, till in 1894 it fell to 82.64. Since then it has been going up with only temporary breaks, till, at the time of these pages going to press, it stands at 100.75 at Rome. Apart from the contingency of war, it is likely to go on rising. Repudiation is impossible. Trade, as we have seen, is expanding and likely to expand. The deficits have ceased, and the new strength of the movement for economy makes their recurrence improbable. The second condition of successful conversion is the disappearance of the premium on gold. It nearly or quite vanished in 1884-90, when the forced currency was really abolished. In 1894 the exchange on London went up

to 29.14. At present it is declining, and now stands at a little over 26½.¹ This makes the funds about 4 to 6 per cent. lower at Paris and London than at Rome. It may be noted, however, that the proportion of Italian bonds held outside Italy is declining at the rate of £6,000,000 to £8,000,000 a year, and are now about only 18 per cent. of the whole debt. The agio is due to some extent to the state of the exchange. The balance of trade is against Italy (though there has been a considerable improvement during the past two years); and the steady transference of bonds from foreign into native hands means an exportation of gold to pay for them. These movements are partially compensated by foreign investments in Italian companies, by the money brought in by tourists and foreign residents (estimated at £12,000,000), and by the savings of emigrants sent to their families in the mother country.² Recently the drain of gold has been somewhat checked. But the main cause of the agio is the excessive circulation of the paper money of the State and private banks. After the bank crisis of 1893 the right of issuing notes was limited to three banks. Their issue is limited, and has to decrease every year till it reaches a minimum in 1906; these notes are legal tender. Strict conditions are laid down as to the reserve in coin and bullion, and the banks are required to liquidate by 1908 the mortgages which had been the chief cause of the crisis. Though their position has improved, it is not yet entirely sound, and their notes are not worth their face-value. The Government still allows the legal limit to be exceeded at times.

¹ At par it would be 25.2215.

² See below, p. 312.

CHAPTER XVI

FOREIGN AND COLONIAL POLICY

Italy and France. Tunis. The Triple Alliance; in 1887; in 1891. Prospects of its renewal. Its effects. Italy and England. Erythræa. Italy in China.

ITALY has never been able to make up her mind whether to lean to the French or the Germans. The princes of Savoy sold their help alternately to France and Austria, and profited from every bargain. Modern Italy, less successful and more honest, has always wavered between Paris and Berlin. Her natural leanings have been, and are still, to France. The common Latin civilization, a kindred tongue, the Napoleonic tradition, a joint antagonism to Austria, the social intercourse with Paris, already drew Italy and France together, before the third Napoleon cemented the friendship at Magenta and Solferino. A few years were enough to shatter the alliance. To French Catholicism the attack on the Temporal Power was the unpardonable sin, and Italy could not forget or forgive Mentana. Already, before Mentana, Italy and Prussia had fought as allies, and when the war of 1870 broke out, not all the efforts of the King and the military party could overbear the determination of the country to shed no drop of blood for France. The Third Republic wiped out Napoleon's blunders, and there was

still a strong body of sentiment in Italy, that would have welcomed a renewal of the old ties with France. But there were two insuperable obstacles. French policy was still dominated by Catholic opinion, and the question of the Temporal Power remained more powerful than the natural affinities, which should have drawn the two nations together. And now that Italy had become a first-rate Power, she inevitably became the rival of France in the Mediterranean. It was the threats of Frenchmen to restore the Pope to his possessions, and the occupation of Tunis in the teeth of promises, that threw Italy into the arms of Germany and Austria.

At the Congress of Berlin Bismarck prompted both Italy and France to seize Tunis. The cynical wickedness of it mattered nothing to him, if he could embroil the two countries and divert French ambitions from Alsace and Lorraine to barren conquests in Africa. The English Government assisted him by encouraging the French, if not to annex Tunis, at all events to develop their influence there.¹ For the moment, however, the statesmen at Paris were too wary to swallow the bait, and promised Italy to make no move except by agreement with her. Possibly, had it not been for the astounding blunders of the Government at Rome, they would have waited long. It was, perhaps, from a real though quite unfounded fear that the Italians intended to declare a protectorate over Tunis, that in 1881 the French decided to forestall them, and, throw-

¹ Parliamentary Papers, 1881, Tunis, No. 1; Chiala, *Tunisi*, 116, 125-130, 184, 287-288, 322.

ing to the winds their repeated promises to Italy and England, occupied the country and proclaimed a protectorate. The irritation in Italy was intense. It was feared that Tunis was a step to Tripoli, and that, with all the South Mediterranean shore in her possession, France would "shut in Italy with a ring of iron," and make an easy swoop on Sicily. Without allies, Italy was hopelessly overmatched, and so far from her having allies, it seemed as if the Papal question might range Germany and Austria as well as France against her.¹ The insults to Pio Nono's corpse gave the Pope a cry, and Bismarck was angling for his support to manage the Centre. "Italy is no friend of ours," he replied, when the Nuncio asked him if he would oppose the restoration of the Temporal Power.² It was a common belief in Italy that France intended sooner or later to restore the Pope, or at least to raise the question of the Pope's position under the Law of Guarantees. If German sympathies were against her, Italy might find herself powerless to resist French demands, except at the cost of a terrible war and almost certain defeat. Men, who saw the dangers of her isolation, pleaded that the country should abandon a policy that had tried to please everybody and pleased none, and frankly offer her alliance to the German Powers. Foolish patriots talked of "Rome aspiring to her ancient greatness," and urged that Italy should make herself a great military and naval power, and

¹ For the history of the Triple Alliance down to 1897, we have relied mainly on Signor Chiala's *La triplice e la duplice alleanza*.

² Cappelli in *Nuova Antologia*, November 1, 1897.

plunge into the full current of European politics. There were cooler heads who saw the danger. Tunis was lost, and no alliance would recover it for Italy. The country was financially almost at the mercy of France, and the hostility of the Paris Bourse would mean a heavy fall in Italian securities, and make the abolition of the forced currency very difficult. The negotiations for a new Commercial Treaty with France were pending, and if they were unsuccessful, Italian trade would lose its best market. And even so half-hearted a Liberal as Depretis saw what peril lay in a rupture with the country that represented Continental Liberalism and in a close association with the two great Conservative Powers.

But the feeling against France was too strong, the fear of isolation too instant, to allow prudent doubters to be heard. And though the Radicals protested against a policy that made for militarism, and the Irredentists denounced an alliance with Austria, and Depretis in the Cabinet clung to the hope of friendship with France, the mass of the Left and his own colleagues overbore his hesitation, while Sonnino brought the Centre and Minghetti brought the Right into line with the majority. The Italian statesmen went cap in hand at Vienna and Berlin to plead for the alliance of the three States. At first they found scant welcome. Andrassy had not forgiven the Irredentist agitation, which had nearly led to war a year ago. Bismarck was probably at the moment seriously favouring the Temporal Power, perhaps because a Pope with a sea-board must listen to

his cannon; and he thought the Depretis Ministry too Radical, and knew the Premier's strong liking for France. But at bottom both Austria and Germany were ready to listen to the Italian overtures. Austria wanted Italian support in the event of a war with Russia, and was probably glad to get the Government at Rome pledged to discountenance the Irredentists. Bismarck, after Gambetta's accession to office in November 1881, was seriously afraid of an attack from France and Russia, and willing to take any allies that offered. But it was still difficult to come to terms. The German Powers wanted a mutual undertaking to follow a Conservative policy at home, and to this even the "cautious Liberalism" of the Government could not consent, though they knew that in any case the Conservative drift of the alliance was bound to react on home affairs. Italy, for her part, asked that the contracting Powers should mutually guarantee each other's interests, which would have secured her German and Austrian support in the Mediterranean; but she could get no more than a promise of "mutual friendly intelligence" on great political questions. The treaty, as finally signed in May 1882, probably contained no more than a mutual guarantee to protect each other's territory and a promise to abstain from any act of aggression.¹ The treaty was to last five years.

It soon became very doubtful whether it would be renewed. Bismarck, always obsessed by the fear of an attack from Russia, found that he could safe-

¹ Chiala, *op. cit.*, 312-318.

guard himself for the time by an agreement with her, which he did his best to conceal from Italy. There all parties were soon at one in condemning the treaty. The country had gained nothing from it, except so far as it had helped to preserve peace. Italy had involved herself in heavy responsibilities, and had nothing to show for it. There was little fear at the moment that France would intervene in the Pope's interest, and the treaty gave no security against her advance in the Mediterranean. Germany had flouted Italy by the secret agreement with Russia. The alliance practically meant a heavy military expenditure, for which the country had small liking. The French Commercial Treaty had been temporarily prolonged at the end of 1881, but it would expire in 1887, and prudent men wanted to have no political tension to reinforce the protectionist agitation that threatened it in both countries. If the Triple Alliance were renewed, at least, its critics urged, Italy should gain some more obvious advantage from it. It was the offer of better conditions that made the renewal possible. Before the treaty lapsed, Bismarck had become so fearful that Russia would break away again, that he was willing to buy a continuance of the Italian alliance by a clause that protected her interests in the Mediterranean. It was at this time, no doubt, that England bound herself to defend the Italian coast.¹ The Government at Rome was satisfied with the concession, and the treaty was renewed for another four years. In the interval the old battle was fought over

¹ See below, p. 299.

it with increased vehemence at home. The Extreme Left, hitherto divided, declared strongly against any further renewal. Count Jacini, on the Conservative side, warmly denounced the "megalomania," that was imposing on the country burdens beyond its strength and had helped to bring about the disastrous tariff-war with France, and he pleaded for military economy and a policy of friendliness to all neighbouring countries. But his death and the stiffneckedness of France in refusing any commercial concession killed the agitation that he had set on foot. The "megalomania," which he attacked, had found its ablest champion in Crispi, who had done his best to exasperate France by speeches of supreme unwisdom. Bismarck possessed for him the fascination that a first-rate statesman generally has for the parvenu minister. He had some big indefinite idea that Italy could become a great military and colonial Power, and that the Triple Alliance made the road to this. Crispi went out of office before the time came for the next renewal of the treaty, but he had given a great impetus to the imperialists. The feeling against France was very bitter. The country charged the alarming fall in the funds to the hostility of the Paris Bourse. During a visit of French pilgrims some one wrote "Long live the Pope-King" in the visitors' book at the Pantheon, where Victor Emmanuel lay buried, and the silly trifle was taken as fresh proof of French intrigues against Italian Unity. The tariff-war with France had brought wide disaster to the trading classes and farmers. It was inevitable under the circumstances that the Triple Alliance should be

renewed. In June 1891 it was continued for six years, or, if not then denounced, for twelve; and the three contracting countries concluded liberal Commercial Treaties to last for the same period.

The treaty was hardly renewed, when the Dual Alliance began to appear on the scene. In July 1891 the French fleet went to Kronstadt, and whether or not there has been any written alliance between France and Russia, some kind of close understanding between them has existed since then. But this later period has seen a marked improvement in the relations between France and Italy. At first, indeed, the bitterness was as great as ever. In 1892 the anniversary of the Sicilian Vespers was ostentatiously celebrated at Palermo, and stones were thrown at the French Embassy at Rome. Next year some Italian workmen were killed in a fierce riot at Aigues-Mortes. In 1896 the flame burst out again, when France denounced the Italian treaty of navigation with Tunis. But henceforward the tide has set steadily towards France. Visconti-Venosta became Foreign Minister in November, and has held almost continuous office since then;¹ and however wanting in force he may be, he at all events represents the older and saner school of Italian statesmen. A new Tunisian treaty was concluded, which practically recognized the French protectorate. In 1898, perhaps as the exchange for this, a new Commercial Treaty brought French and Italian trade together again. There has been a growing coolness between Paris and the Vatican, and France is no

¹ He is now (Feb. 1901) out of office.

longer likely to harass Italy for the Pope's pleasure. International interests have shifted to colonial questions. Italian Imperialism has had its day and is discredited. Trade with Tunis has not suffered, and the Italian settlement there has tripled. The growing democratic forces naturally make for friendliness with France, and though there are still suspicions of French designs in Tripoli and Morocco, Italy is not likely to go to war to check them. And at the same time the old dislike of the Triple Alliance, which never quite died down, has revived in greater strength than ever. In the days of cool reflection, that have come since Adowa, Italy has realized that her militarism threatens to ruin her, and that big armaments follow alliances, as night follows day. There is a good deal of friction on minor points. It is true that Irredentism is a nearly spent force. The Austrian Italians are making a brave fight for their nationality against the wave of German and Slav propagandism that threatens to submerge them; and though they are losing ground in the Tyrol, they seem to be holding their own in Istria and Dalmatia. But their efforts are directed rather to asserting their position in the Empire, than to any movement for union with Italy; and they no longer appeal, as they did even ten years ago, to Italian sympathies. The old generation, which remembered the war of 1866 and the Irredentist agitation of 1879, is passing away. The Socialists repudiate them as a reactionary and Clericalist party, and bid the country think of "the *terra irredenta* of Lombardy, where men die of *pellagra* and hunger."

But Irredentism still makes possibilities of friction on the frontier, and there is some strain over the future of Albania. We must have either an independent Albania or an Italian Albania, but never an Austrian Albania, which might endanger Italian control of the Adriatic, says the *Tribuna*. There are smaller differences with Germany—a natural dislike of the Emperor, indignation at the German barbarities in China. And there are two much more serious obstacles to a renewal of the alliance. One is the internal condition of Austria. The other is the protectionist agitation in Germany and Austria, which threatens the renewal of the Commercial Treaties in 1903. Should it be successful in denouncing or mutilating them, a heavy blow would be struck at Italian trade, and the political alliance would lose its one solid advantage. Already it is rumoured that the Italian Government has made their renewal a *sine quâ non* of any prolongation of the alliance. In spite of all, however, the probabilities are that the Triple Alliance will go on. If, however, it is renewed, it will be from no enthusiasm for it, but only to purchase the continuance of the Commercial Treaties, or from a kind of supine fatalism, which accepts it as an unavoidable burden.¹

It is very difficult to weigh what Italy has gained and lost from the Triple Alliance. In its early days,

¹ Signor Zanardelli has quite recently (March 1901) informed a correspondent of the *New York Herald* that he will not pledge himself to a renewal of the alliance; that "in any case Italy and France must remain friends." This either is bluff to obtain better terms in the Commercial Treaties or indicates a serious hesitation on the part of his Government as to the future of the alliance.

no doubt, it safeguarded her from the very real danger of a French attack. Possibly it has helped to preserve the European peace, and if so, Italy has gained, for a war in which she was involved would have brought bankruptcy and perhaps revolution. But only conjecture is possible, and one may be sceptical of the contention that the mere adhesion of Italy to the alliance of the Central Powers has weighed among the forces that have made for peace in the last twenty years. At all events, other profit there has been none. Italy has not saved Tunis; she has refused the condominium in Egypt; the North African hinterland has passed under French control; and—far worse than these—the Triple Alliance has fed the disastrous colonial policy, which has drained the strength and credit of the country. At home it may be questioned whether the fears of Conservative contagion have been altogether realized; but the alliance has probably had a subtle influence on Court and Cabinet, that helped to swell the reaction against Liberal government. Commercially, Italy has probably gained. The Commercial Treaties with Germany and Austria are the direct fruit of the political understanding. Nor would it be fair to charge to the alliance the rupture of the French treaty; for the strain between the two countries was largely independent of it, and the protectionist current ran too strongly, at all events in France, to permit any renewal of the treaty in 1887. On the other hand, the withdrawal of French capital and the hostility of the Paris Bourse and banks, which was the immediate cause of the building crisis at Rome and helped the depreciation

of Italian bonds, sprang mainly from political causes. And trade, like every other department of Italian life, has suffered from the cost of the swollen armaments, for which the Triple Alliance is chiefly responsible. It is true that there is no specific obligation in the Triple Alliance, which compelled Italy to increase her armaments.¹ It is true, too, that quite independently of it, the influence of the Court and the reactionary party has made for a strong army, and that the first increase of military expenditure was prior to the alliance and due to French hostility. But none the less it has inevitably strengthened the tendency; for Italian pride insisted that the country should have an army as far as possible worthy of its allies, and make at least some pretence to pose as a military power. It has been said that the alliance has brought a moral gain, that Italy has gained in dignity and self-respect by the consciousness that she is playing a part in the European polity. It may be doubted whether there is very much in this, whether a nebulous and undirected national pride is worth as much as the sense of social duty, the education of industrial effort, that quiet domestic development would have done much more to foster. Fantastic "megalomania," with its want of bottom, its inattention to the prose of national duty, has impaired both the sanity and morality of Italian politics.

A feeling of the uselessness or mischief of the Triple Alliance has prompted a certain desire to replace it by an exclusive understanding with England. It is prac-

¹ Chiala, *op. cit.*, 593-595.

tically an established fact that when the alliance was renewed in 1887, some sort of treaty was made between Italy and England, which engaged England to preserve the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and defend Italy from invasion by sea.¹ As early as February 1887, according to the inspired information of Signor Chiala, Depretis told his colleagues that, "with regard to England, no Italian Cabinet would have dared to hope for what our Count di Robilant (the Foreign Minister) has gained; our position is now secure both by land and sea." In the following November Lord Salisbury hinted at the alliance at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, and the *Times* gave its main provisions. Five years later Bismarck practically asserted its existence in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*. Attempts to elicit the facts in the House of Commons drew from Sir James Fergusson and Mr. Gladstone vague replies, that left little doubt as to the main fact. Whether the alliance still exists is a secret of the Cabinets, though, at all events as late as 1896, the then Italian Foreign Minister stated that "our friendly relations with England are in our view the natural complement of the Triple Alliance." Nor is it known what is the *quid pro quo*; probably it has reference to common action in the Near East or to Egypt. A section, at all events, of Italian politicians would gladly see the understanding with England continue, even if the Triple Alliance broke up, and they speculate that England will be driven by her isolation to make it yet more complete. Such an alliance would

¹ Chiala, *op. cit.*, 595, 701-707; Cappelli, *op. cit.*, 751; Stillman, *The Union of Italy*, 389.

be all to Italy's interest in the event of a European war. Her great military danger lies in her long and unprotected coast. If an invading force landed in Tuscany, it would cut the country into two ; and, in any case, without the command of the sea, Sicily and Sardinia would fall an easy prey to expeditions from Biserta or Toulon. Whether England would stand to gain is more doubtful. The day has passed when the Italian possession of Erythræa can be of any service to us in Egypt. Though the Italian fleet is fairly strong on paper, it may be questioned whether it has any great fighting value, and pessimists in Italy prophesy that on the outbreak of hostilities it would fall an easy prey to the French, unless it formed a junction with the British fleet. And the desire for our alliance is based simply on calculation of its utility, in no degree on any affection to us. The old sentimental attachment to the England of Palmerston and Gladstone and Victoria is dying out. For thirty years past it has been the policy of the English Government to use Italy for its own purposes, and our recent attitude in particular has, in spite of the alliance, left a good deal of soreness. The Italians reproach us that we pushed them into the African fiasco, that we gave them little thanks for holding Kassala to facilitate our advance up the Nile ; they complain that the Anglo-French agreement on the North African hinterland has bartered away their dormant claims to Tripoli, which would be valueless without the trade routes to the interior. And, far more serious than these minor causes of friction, there is a very strong resentment against our South African policy, especially in its later develop-

ments. The Liberals and Democrats criticize it bitterly. The official classes, while they do not wish to see an ally lose prestige, protest that their sympathies are with the Boers. Men, who had been trained almost to venerate England as the friend of nationality and freedom and the weak, lament that we have deserted the principles that once won for us the love of Italy.

The language question at Malta also stirred, at all events at the moment, a good deal of angry feeling. The mass of the Maltese speak a vernacular of their own, with affinities to the Arabic. But there is a large and important Italian colony; Italian has long been the language of the law courts, it is extensively used in commercial correspondence, and is a kind of *lingua franca* here as throughout the Mediterranean. And though it may be a foreign tongue to the non-Italian natives, it is hardly more so than to the dialect-speaking Sicilians, and indeed to the mass of Italians on the mainland.¹ Till recently the English Government had been careful to show a scrupulous respect for Maltese nationality. This policy has now been reversed, and a recent Order in Council has, in defiance of the practically representative Council of Government, and in defiance of Maltese opinion as expressed at the polls, enacted that English shall be used in the courts in certain cases at once, and in all cases after fifteen years. There appears to be no sufficient reason for the change; the arbitrariness and want of tact that has marked the

¹ See below, p. 322.

action of the Colonial Office has made matters worse, and the Maltese have been encouraged by the language of officials, though no doubt mistakenly, to regard the new departure as the first step of a systematic attack on their nationality and religion.¹ Their irritation has naturally had its echo in Italy, and added to the anti-English feeling that the Transvaal war called out.

One of the worst results of the Triple Alliance has been the encouragement it gave to the luckless essay at colonial empire. As early as Cavour's time there had been plans for a commercial settlement on the Abyssinian coast. In 1870 the Rubattino Steamship Company bought, with funds supplied by the Government, the small coaling-station of Assab, north of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and towards 1882 the station was gradually transferred to the Government itself. In 1885, at the instigation of the English Government, the Depretis Cabinet suddenly decided to occupy Massowa, a little port in the midst of a fever-stricken, sandy waste, near the Tigré province of Abyssinia. The motives of the occupation were complex. In part it was a counterblast to the French occupation of Tunis, and Mancini, the Foreign Minister, talked in melodrama of "picking up the keys of the Mediterranean in the Red Sea." Partly it was prompted by a desire to conciliate England, somewhat affronted by the refusal of condominium in Egypt three years

¹ Parliamentary Papers, 1899, Malta (Political Condition). For a sample of Italian feeling on the matter, see *Atti della Società "Dante Alighieri,"* Marzo, 1900, pp. 31 *et seq.*

before.¹ Partly it was a reply to the German-Russian understanding, and was intended to show that if Berlin could have its special agreement with St. Petersburg, Rome could have hers too with London. And the public were nursed with grandiose dreams of empire, of an occupation of Abyssinia and a diversion of Italian emigration thither, of a great colonial territory under the Italian flag, which would perhaps stretch to the Soudan.

The death of Gordon and the abandonment of the Soudan checked any further move for the time, and the Government, with very doubtful sincerity, still protested that the colony was not intended to be more than a small commercial settlement. But in 1887, partly to satisfy the inevitable tendency to expansion, partly to find healthier quarters for their troops, the Italians advanced to the contiguous highlands. Up till now there had been every desire on the part of the Abyssinians to give them special trading facilities; but the advance at once made the Negus John and his feudatory chiefs suspicious that it was the first step to an attack on Abyssinian independence. The Negus demanded a withdrawal to the coast, and when this was refused, one of his chiefs attacked and destroyed a column of 500 men at Dogali. The real misfortune of the defeat was that it pledged the Italians to a war of conquest. Public opinion, hitherto very scap-

¹ We can find no confirmation of Mr. Stillman's statement (*op. cit.*, 377-378) that there was a secret understanding with France to make it a base for reaching the Nile at Khartoum, and pave the way to a condominium of England, France, and Italy. The statement seems to conflict with all the known facts.

tical of the whole colonial experiment, cried for revenge, an expedition was hurried out, and all the endeavours of the English Government to patch up peace were spoilt by Crispi's refusal to pledge himself against further annexations. For the moment, however, the Negus' retreat and his death in a battle with the Dervishes at Metemma early in 1889 seemed to offer the prospect of peaceful expansion. The new Negus, King Menelek of Shoa, had been helped by the Italians to the throne, and he probably hoped to have them as allies against his half-rebellious subjects in Tigré. Two towns on the highlands had already been occupied and outposts pushed forward as far as the Mareb river on the South. The new colony was baptized Erythræa, and a protectorate was declared over part of the Somali coast. Menelek signed the Treaty of Ucciali, which, the Italians fondly imagined, secured them the protectorate of all Abyssinia and indefinite possibilities of expansion.

But the pleasant dream soon faded. The colony brought no return; the attempts at settling Italian colonists broke down; there was constant friction between the Government and the military authorities; the policy towards Abyssinia had been one of pitiful vacillation; the army of occupation was too small to guard the colony from a serious attack, and attack from Abyssinia or Tigré was only too probable. The native regiments, indeed, repulsed an attack of Dervishes on the Western frontier at the end of 1893, and Kassala was occupied in the following summer. But this small success was overshadowed by the greater danger from

Abyssinia. Menelek, there is little doubt, had definitely accepted the protectorate. But native feeling declared against the treaty ; he was irritated by the overbearing claims of the Italians as to the frontier of the colony and by their encouragement of the rebel feudatory of Tigré. French intrigues worked on his suspicions. He took advantage of an inaccurate translation of the treaty to deny that it implied a protectorate, and in 1891 he practically repudiated it. This and Crispi's return to office in 1893 made war inevitable. The forward party in the colony were given free rein. The blundering Italian diplomatists had broken with the Ras of Tigré, and at the end of 1894 the Italians invaded the province with a force that was ludicrously inadequate. So long, however, as they had only the Tigré levies to oppose them, they found it easy to advance, and as soon as Crispi could get a free hand at home, he ordered the occupation of the capital, Adowa (April 1895). Later in the year the province was formally annexed. But the Government had been blind to all warnings of danger from Abyssinia. Native opinion made it impossible for the Negus to brook the invasion of a feudatory State. He seems to have sincerely desired peace ; but Crispi would have none, till the Italians had won a conspicuous military success and Menelek had recognized the Italian protectorate. The Government amused itself with drafting humiliating conditions of peace, while the Negus was advancing with an overwhelming force. They had entirely underrated his strength, and when they recognized the danger, sent reinforcements which arrived too late. In

March 1896, 14,000 Italian and native troops were attacked by 100,000 Abyssinians near Adowa. They made a fine defence against overwhelming numbers, but one-third were killed or wounded, and less than half the army escaped to tell the tale of defeat.

There had always been grave doubts of the wisdom of the colonial policy, and it had needed all Crispi's masterful insistency to push it forward. Adowa finally disillusioned the Italians of hopes of colonial empire. In the days of wrath and panic that succeeded the disaster, a regiment refused to sail to Africa, and Milan and Pavia were not far off from revolution. There was a strong party, especially in Piedmont and Lombardy, for abandoning the colony, or at least restricting it to the coast. 138 Deputies, drawn from every party in the Chamber, voted for withdrawal, but the mass of opinion would not sanction what seemed a humiliating and cowardly surrender. Di Rudinì took a middle course. He insisted that the colony should be organized on a commercial and not a military basis, that its cost should not exceed £360,000, and that its limits should be drawn so as to bring the expenditure within that sum. The protectorate of Abyssinia was abandoned and peace was concluded. In 1897 a commercial treaty with the Negus gave Italians liberty to travel and trade in Abyssinia and conceded the most favoured nation clause. Negotiations were opened for the delimitation of boundaries, though the difficulties of reconciling Italian and Abyssinian ambitions have prevented up till now any final settlement. The protectorate of part of the Somali coast is retained, and by

an amazing arrangement, which betrays the colonial incompetence of the Italian Government, £16,000 a year are paid by the State to a private trading company for administering the district of Benadir.

If the Italians had been wise, they would have abandoned a land, which has brought and will bring nothing but loss and danger. The colonial experiment has been throughout one story of mismanagement and miscalculation. It has probably cost from first to last not much less than £20,000,000; it still means a financial loss of £360,000 to £400,000 a year. It has been an evil and perturbing influence on Italian politics. It has brought the country a great humiliation. And there is nothing to show for it. The coast zone is almost uninhabitable for Europeans. The hill-country is healthy and in parts fertile, but there is much scarcity of water, and the great variations of temperature make it impossible to grow colonial products. The attempts to cultivate cotton and tobacco have been abandoned. And colonists will not settle in a half-savage country, where war may break out again at any moment, while in South America there are rich and peaceful lands, where great Italian settlements welcome the emigrant to a land where his own tongue predominates. Gold has been discovered near Asmara, probably in fairly rich deposits, but the country is at present too difficult of access to encourage miners. The railways that are being built in the colony and in Abyssinia may facilitate the opening of commerce with the interior, but again the prospect is too uncertain to attract business enterprise, while

there is a far larger and easier field in the Argentine. And meanwhile the colony is a standing peril to Italian security. The little army of 1300 Italians and 5500 natives is sufficient to irritate but powerless to protect. Erythræa lies in close proximity to a powerful military state, which might at any moment find it to its interest to invade the defenceless border. Menelek has probably 160,000 to 180,000 good rifles, 100 modern cannon, 20,000 to 25,000 good cavalry, and an inexhaustible supply of foot soldiers, who have been good fighters as long as history has record of them.¹ The English advance to Khartoum no doubt makes him less disposed to take any offensive. But French and Russian influences, though weakened, are not extinct; the colony invites a raid from the half-savage tribes that own his more or less nominal sway; the still unsettled boundary question leaves the possibility of friction with himself, and still greater danger, should his death open the way to civil war and anarchy in Abyssinia. It is probably too much to hope that the Italians will sacrifice national pride to national welfare. But a truly wise and strong statesman would undo the error, which hangs so threateningly over the future of Italy, and withdraw for good and all from Erythræa.

So unteachable, however, is the Italian Government, that it could not resist taking a part in the scramble for China, and in 1899 occupied the bay of San-Mun. There was no excuse for it. The Italian trade with China is very small; and practically no Italians have settled there. It implied either a heavy addition to

¹ Ad. Rossi, *L'oro e le spine nell' Eritrea*, 13-16.

the cost of the fleet or a serious weakening of the home defences. The whole incident was marked by an incredible recklessness. Nobody in Italy, it is said, knew anything of the geography of the bay, till some foreign books were found to tell them a little of it. So blundering was the diplomacy, that Giolitti from the opposition benches prayed the Government in sheer pity for the country's credit not to publish the papers. Luckily, however, the public saw the danger, and so present was the dread of a repetition of the African mistake, that the Government realized that Parliament would not consent to the occupation, and withdrew the ships. The adventure cost the country £160,000, but its issue has shown that Italy has no wish to have another Erythræa added to its burdens. The part taken in the present expedition to China stands on another footing. It would, no doubt, have been very difficult for Italy to break away from the European Concert, and even a section of the Extreme Left have felt this. But there is a strong fear that the Government, despite its disclaimers, intends it as a step to fresh colonial adventures, and it is possible that there are commercial interests, which will do their best to push them to it. The barbarities of the allied troops have created a strong repulsion to the whole business, and there is an agitation of some strength for the withdrawal of the Italian contingent.

CHAPTER XVII

GREATER ITALY

Emigration. Its effects in Italy. Emigration to the United States; to South America. Greater Italy. The Government and emigration.

THE Erythrean folly is the greater, that Italian expansion has advanced triumphantly in another direction. While the Government has wasted its millions on a land of war and poverty, while trade has stubbornly refused to follow the flag, the Italian artisans and labourers, unaided, sometimes disencouraged, by the State, have been building up in South America a Greater Italy, which is destined to play a big part in the world's history. The flow of emigration during the last twenty years is the natural remedy for a poverty, that comes largely of over-population. The Italians are one of the most prolific of races. The birth-rate is nearly the highest in Europe—highest, unfortunately, in those districts where illiteracy and poverty are greatest. The excess of births over deaths is exceeded only in Germany, Great Britain, and the Scandinavian countries, and it tends to increase, as better sanitation rapidly reduces the death-rate. The density of population is far in excess of that of Germany or Austria or France. Parts of Lombardy and Venetia have a thicker population than any European country except Belgium, and a careful observer has estimated that

there are one-third too many labourers in the Po valley. There are parts of the country, where Malthus' theory becomes fact, and the growth of population means something not far off starvation. Thus emigration is having a beneficent economic influence at home, and is likely to have more in the future. In the rural districts, from which most of it comes, it is sensibly reducing the mass of poverty, though perhaps not in its acutest form. "Tens of thousands of peasants and labourers," says Professor Nitti, "go to gain outside their country the daily bread they could not gain within it." They send to their families and relatives in the old country from £6,000,000 to £8,000,000 a year—a sum, which not only means a sensible addition to the income of the working classes, but must have its influence on the problem of the currency. And the reduced pressure of competition is perhaps the most hopeful agency to raise the wages of the agricultural labourer and reduce the rents of the small farmer. Emigration has a still more far-reaching consequence. The multitude of emigrants, who return home again, bring to many a dark and sequestered village a prosperity and a standard of life unknown before. Besides the thousands, who leave for the summer's work and return regularly in the winter, there are few emigrants, who do not cherish a hope of seeing home once more. If they sell their little property before they go, they generally retain the power to repurchase. In 1898, 66,000 emigrants, half of them agricultural labourers, returned to the port of Genoa. They come back with their little savings to buy or improve a farm or build

a better cottage. There are several small country towns in Southern Italy, which have risen from squalor to something of prosperity through the money and influence of those who have come home. And they return from France and Switzerland, from the United States and the Argentine, with their old Conservatism broken up, and bringing back a stock of new ideas, that are leavening rural thought. As in Ireland, the returned emigrant is sapping the domination of the landlord and the priest.

Italian emigration is of two kinds. There is the temporary emigration of the men—two-thirds of them from Venetia—who seek various kinds of work, mostly unskilled, in France and Austria, in Switzerland and Germany and Tunis. They are the navvies and railway-builders of the Continent, a sober, industrious, saving race, bitterly hated by the native workman, because they take a lower rate of pay, living lives of squalor and privation, but managing out of their wages of 3s. or 3s. 6d. a day to bring back a little hoard to keep their farms going or tide over the winter. Their number grows steadily year by year, and in 1899 there were about 165,000¹ of them. There are a certain number of permanent emigrants, who settle in France and Tunis. The latter is almost an Italian country, and so much is Italian its language, that the French Deputies have to address public meetings in it. But these movements, however important in their economic effects, have not the political moment of the emigration,

¹ The official figures are misleading, as some 12,000 "temporary" emigrants sail every year to America from foreign ports.

which takes over 150,000 every year to settle across the Atlantic. Three countries—the United States, Brazil, the Argentine—absorb nearly the whole of these. The emigration to the United States grows steadily. In 1898 it reached 78,000, and for the first time was greater than that of any other country, being more than double the British immigration and three times greater than the German. But from a political point of view the immigration into North America is of comparatively little importance. The Italian finds himself face to face with the Anglo-Saxon and the German, and is handicapped in the fierce competition by his poverty and illiteracy.¹ He is despised as a pauper, suspected by the working classes because of his cheap labour, hated by the Irish, who regard him as an enemy of the Pope. And thus he often loses his nationality, and becomes an undistinguished part of the great alien proletariat. Or if he retains his love of fatherland, his ambition is to save a little money and return; he has none to raise the status of his class in his adopted country. It is only in California, where there are 45,000 Italians, mostly from the Riviera, that they prosper. Here they have a certain amount of trade in their hands, especially fruit-growing and fishing. Their property is estimated at £10,000,000. A Piedmontese firm of vine-growers at a new Asti produced in 1897 two million gallons of wine.

While the Italians as a race have no future in North America, a vast breadth of the southern continent promises in a few decades to be a great Italian

¹ See above, p. 235.

country. There are already, it is probable, in Brazil and Uruguay and the Argentine about 3,000,000 Italians in a population of some 23,000,000, of whom the great majority are Portuguese or Spaniards. Their numbers swell with an annual immigration of 110,000, nearly as many as that from all other countries combined; and they are more prolific than the stagnant native population. It is not an extravagant estimate that by the middle of the century there will be 15,000,000 of them, and even if they are not a numerical majority, they will, at all events, be the virile and dominant element. In Brazil there are at least 1,300,000¹ of Italian blood, possibly many more, and some provinces are peopled almost entirely by them. In 1891-95 the Italian immigrants numbered 378,000 out of a total of 660,000, and unenterprising Spaniards and Portuguese formed the great bulk of the remainder. In some respects their position is not so bright as in the Argentine. Much of the country is unhealthy. Thousands have been lured by the delusive promises of emigration agents, and find themselves isolated and helpless, in a condition not far removed from serfdom. But they are asserting themselves rapidly among the inferior races that surround them. The Portuguese have all the pride and idleness of a decaying people; the half-bloods and freed slaves have small wish or power to aspire. And the Italian, unknown here thirty years ago, has brought a patient industry and a commercial enterprise new to the land.

¹ The *Journal do Commercio* of Brazil puts them at 1,374,000. Signor Einaudi estimates them at 2,000,000.

The chief building firm at Rio, the largest flour-mills in the State, belong to Italians ; the banks, the hat industry, the textile manufactures are largely in their hands. The great State, with an area nearly as large as Europe and of boundless fertility, promises under Italian auspices to rise to a prosperity it has never known.

What is likely to be the future of Brazil is already happening in the Argentine. Here, out of four and a half million inhabitants (almost all white men), over one million are Italians, and Italian blood runs in the veins of perhaps one-third of the remainder. The annual Italian immigration averages over 46,000, or nearly one-half of the whole. At Buenos Ayres at least one-third of the 600,000 inhabitants are Italians. They already hold the first rank in the industry of the country. The bulk of the engineering and milling and furniture, of the paper and soap industries, almost all the hat and tobacco manufactures, most of the cement and marble works, a large part of the tanning and tinned meat businesses, is in their hands. They own nearly half the commercial firms of Buenos Ayres, with a capital of £30,000,000, and more than half its workshops. Italian architects and masons have built the greater part of Buenos Ayres and La Plata. Italians and Dalmatians have all the river carrying trade and two-thirds of the coasting trade. Italian peasants and men of business have almost a monopoly of the corn-farms. The native Spaniard despises tillage, and the production of corn and artificial grasses and vines has been practically created by the new-comers. They own

rural property to the value of £10,000,000, and one in every eight is a proprietor. In the wheat-growing provinces they constitute the enormous majority of the population. A Piedmontese proprietor plants 67,000 acres in wheat; an Italian firm mows 12,000 acres of temporary grasses; an Italian, the foremost wine producer of South America, has 2500 acres under vines. The Italian vine-growers of Mendoza and San Juan and Buenos Ayres produce every year 33,000,000 gallons of wine. It is a mighty work, that these uneducated, poverty-stricken Italian peasants have built up in a few years. By sheer dint of industry and perseverance and native shrewdness, the men, who in the United States are condemned as useless or dangerous paupers, have carved their way to comfort or affluence. Many a poor peasant, who crossed the Atlantic to escape a life of squalor and misery, sees his sons in Parliament or prosperous lawyers and engineers, and perhaps has sent them to have a university education in the mother-country, which he left a pauper. Boys and men have gone from Como and Novi and Domodossola with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and now are masters of great factories. The chief agent on Change at Buenos Ayres was an unruly boy, who ran away from home without a sou. The Argentine "wheat king," whose property is valued at £2,000,000, had half a franc when he landed. One, who was a humble engineer on a Sardinian railway, is now the greatest contractor in South America. A small cotton millowner from Busto Arsizio has built up in ten years a business, which owns the largest mill

in South America, and imports £300,000 a year of Italian stuffs. Italian lawyers and authors have made themselves a name. An Italian has been President of the Republic; the present Ministers of Education and War are Italians. Most of these or their fathers have been self-made men; but of recent years the immigrants have included not only peasants and artisans, but managers and manufacturers, whose capacity finds here an outlet, which it never had at home. "Italy," says Signor Einaudi, "is beginning to export not only common labour, but captains of industry as well."

Here, then, in the vast plains of South America lies the future of the Italian people. And a great future it is. In another century there will be 100,000,000 Italians, and Italian will be, after English and Russian, the most widely spoken of Aryan tongues. The future of the world is to the colonizing races; and there are only three white peoples that have the colonial instinct. But Greater Italy differs from Greater Britain and from Russia in that it has no dream of an imperial destiny. The Italian colonist, indeed, clings, as a rule, to his nationality; he refuses to be absorbed, as the German does, by the environing race; he has all the Englishman's tenacious love of the language and customs of the mother-country. He keeps his close connections with it, social, educational, industrial; already the Argentine imports more from Italy than from any other country except Great Britain. But he has no ambition to live under the national flag. Circumstances have shaped it otherwise, and he has brought with him bitter memories of what Italian government means. He prefers to

become the loyal citizen of another country, to work out his individual salvation there, and let his own native force make him the predominant element in it. The future will show whether his ideal or the British is the more enduring.

The Italian Government, in its short-sightedness or worse, has viewed all this great movement with indifference or suspicion. A few years ago the feeling was general among the ruling classes that emigration was a loss to the country, and in the heyday of pseudo-patriotism under Crispi the Government did all it could to discourage it. It was not only landlords, who pleaded that a check on emigration was the only cure for agricultural distress; even the economists condemned it. In 1887 Crispi proposed that the Government should have power to restrict emigration in any given province, and punish officials and priests who recommended it. In the following year a law was actually passed, forbidding any person liable to military service in time of war, that is, all males under thirty-two, to leave the country without permission of the War Office—a law which at once reduced permanent emigration by nearly one-half. It goes without saying that the State has done little to protect the emigrant. It supports an emigration office at Ellis Island, near New York, but so far from doing anything in South America, in a fit of perverse economy it abolished the Italian consulate at Buenos Ayres. It did nothing to check the unscrupulous emigration agents, who sometimes drive a "slave-market" in Italian labour; it did nothing to insist on proper accommodation in

emigrant ships. These are scandals that have rung through Italy. In 1896 there were over 7000 emigration agents in the country, and too many of them have speculated on the peasant's ignorance, giving false information as to the labour-market, sometimes cheating him of the little hoard he had taken with him, or deliberately sending him to a different locality from that agreed upon. Men, who had paid to be taken to their relatives in South Brazil, have been fraudulently sent to the pestilential provinces of the North; or, when they had taken berths on a fast-sailing vessel, have been forced to travel on some slow and ill-appointed ship. Some of the larger shipping lines treat their passengers fairly well, but sometimes even the subsidized companies provide disgraceful accommodation, and a recent ring has raised the fares to a figure, that means the loss of tens of thousands every year to the poor emigrant. Some of the smaller vessels take months to cross the Atlantic, and have a frightful mortality. Unseaworthy colliers, unfit for their original uses, have been turned to carry human flesh. Careful statistics have proved that the great majority of deaths on the voyage are due to avoidable causes.

Public opinion is at length forcing Parliament to take action. In 1896 it was proposed to make the emigration agencies illegal and insist on a minimum standard of accommodation in emigrant ships. A Bill introduced in the spring of last year was shipwrecked in the political crisis, but another drawn on the same lines passed the Chamber in December, and, it is to

be hoped, will have become law before these pages see the light. Its chief provision establishes a State Commission for emigration with local committees, which will protect the emigrant, diffuse information as to foreign countries, and have power to revise all fares on emigrant vessels. At the same time the emigration agencies will become illegal, and the Government will erect shelters at the chief ports of departure and arrival. It is possible that before long the Government will take under its charge the Italian schools in the Argentine. It was only last year that Italian became an obligatory subject in them, and the voluntary Italian schools, to which the Government at home contributes a poor £560, provide for only one Italian child in six. It follows that the patois-speaking immigrant finds it as easy to learn Spanish as Italian, or adopts a *lingua franca*. A good deal has been done by the richer Italian residents and by the "Dante Alighieri" Society, founded "to protect and diffuse the Italian tongue and civilization among Italians outside Italy." But their resources have proved inadequate, and public opinion will probably compel the Government to take action in a matter so important for the preservation of Italian nationality in South America.

CHAPTER XVIII

LITERATURE

Literature in Italy. Giosue Carducci. Olindo Guerrini. Gabriele D'Annunzio. Antonio Fogazzaro. Giovanni Verga. Emilio De Marchi. Edmondo De Amicis. Giovanni Pascoli. Matilde Serao. Ada Negri. Conclusion.

BEFORE passing any judgment on recent Italian literature, it is well to consider the conditions under which it has been produced. Literary Italian is, and always has been, a conventional language; nowhere spoken as a living tongue;¹ nowhere a medium for the expression of the intimate realities of life. It therefore lacks that vivifying contact with popular sentiment and activity, so essential to a great national literature. Authors, if they wish to give verisimilitude to scenes of humble life, are driven either, like Fogazzaro in the *Piccolo Mondo antico*, to use the vernacular, and so make their dialogue unintelligible to the majority of Italian readers, or, like Verga in his Sicilian stories, to debase the fine gold of the Italian language by too great an alloy of dialect. Moreover, the exercise of the higher forms of literature is a luxury in Italy. No poet, hardly a novelist, succeeds in making a livelihood by his pen. Even Gabriele D'Annunzio would fare

¹ Prof. Mosca of Turin tells us there are some slight indications of a beginning in this direction, but too small at present to draw conclusions from. A Sicilian, he confesses difficulty in expressing himself adequately on popular and intimate subjects in Italian.

ill, were he to depend exclusively on the sales of his works in Italy. For educated Italians are poor, the proportion of illiterates, especially in the South, is high, and even of those who satisfy the small requirements of the elementary school, a certain number soon lose the power of reading and speaking Italian. Again, the nation has no recognised literary centre, no focus of intellectual activity, to give men added strength and perfected art, where

*"Come specchio l'uno all'altro rende."*¹

Yet again Italians, by the exigencies of their national condition and by the predominant tone of their minds, have been directed to economic and social studies rather than to *belles-lettres*. They are like a man who should come to the heritage of a vast and neglected estate, burdened with debt and responsibilities. His first and urgent duty is to set his house in order. The essentially practical nature of the Italian genius, therefore, has been, and is, mainly applied to working out economic and social problems. Of the amazing output of this economic, sociological, and scientific literature it is not our province to treat. Many of its exponents are men of European fame: Lombroso in criminology, Grassi in biology, Loria in economics, Villari in history, are but a few.

These disadvantages make the real merit of the best Italian writers the more remarkable. Of their poets, one at least stands in the front rank. In Carducci Italy has given birth to a singer, whose verse has immortalised the aspirations, the enthusiasms, the revolutionary daring,

¹ Purgatory XV. 75.

of the generation that made Italian Unity, and has set again to music the underlying Latin and Hellenic instincts in her people. Poets there are, and have been, so steeped in Roman and Greek culture, that the fabric of their thought is suffused with Paganism. But Carducci's classicism is part of his very being: it is a reawakening of the Pagan¹ bred in the Italian race. In him this immortal Hellenic spirit, overlaid indeed, but not driven out by Christian thought and sentiment, lives on: its love of external nature, of corporeal strength and sensuous beauty; its call to enjoy; its aversion from pain and asceticism; its abhorrence of the ugly and deformed; its shrinking from the grave; its clearness of vision; its virile strength; its sense of proportion; its grace of form. All these in Carducci are native and not acquired qualities; they are the man himself. He may be defined as a Pagan recalcitrant under Christian influences rather than a Christian classicised by Pagan culture.

Born in 1836, of a well-read country doctor in Tuscany, he was early taught to love Virgil, Dante, and Tasso. His mother was wont, he tells us, "in the peaceful solitude of our home to teach us to read Alfieri instead of fostering superstition." At the age of twenty-five he was appointed to the chair of literature in the University of Bologna, and in this famous old city he has devoted an uneventful² but strenuous life to the service of his art and of higher education.

¹ To this day common oaths in Italy are *per Bacco* (by Bacchus), *Corpo di Bacco* (body of Bacchus), *per Diana* (by Diana).

² He was, however, suspended for a brief period in 1867 for having signed an address to Mazzini.

His work has the strength and nobility of genius. Spite of critic or populace, he would *far l' arte* (live for his art). He was ever a fighter. "I am by nature," he says, "inclined to opposition even in literary matters. I feel like a fish out of water when I am with a majority." During his period of fervid patriotism, he did not conceal his scorn of the monarchical party, and urged the King to pitch his crown over the Po and become the armed tribune of the Italian revolution.

The publication of the *Odi barbare* in 1877 marked an epoch in Italian literature: in their last edition¹ they most fully reveal the maturity of Carducci's powers. Early in his career he revolted against the flaccid, conventional forms of Italian poetry, with their facile versification and premium on mediocrity. For his new thought he felt the need of a new metre, and in the *Odi* he has beaten out his music in forms of ancient classic models, modified, however, by essentially Italian rhythm and cadence. The innovation excited a fierce literary controversy; but it is the privilege of genius to make its own rules, and it were as futile to criticise Carducci for breaking from traditional form in poetry as to criticise Wagner for having done the like in music. No modern lyrist so closely reproduces the chiselled monumental grandeur, the sobriety and grace of the classic poets. Yet his subject-matter is actual enough. The poem on the death of the Prince Imperial,² while it has the calm pathos and reserve of a Greek tragedy, is in content essentially modern. And Carducci

¹ Bologna, 1893.

² " *Per la Morte di Napoleone Eugenio.*"—*Odi barbare*.

too has been subdued by the influence—the baleful influence, as he would term it—of Semitic theology. There runs a burden of sadness through even his most joyous song: “The pale form of the Nazarene casts its shadow and pollutes the air with sorrow.” He enters a Gothic church;¹ the marble shafts seem in the sacred gloom an army of giants marching in steady files to war against the Invisible; panting and solitary souls strive amid the tumult of men to reach God’s presence. But he asks for no God; he watches till the echoes are awakened by a dainty, well-known footstep, and Lydia reveals her bright tresses, and love shines from a pale, shy face through the black veil. “Farewell, Semitic God; Death rules in thy mysteries; thy temples shut out the sun.” Nor has he escaped the more prosaic and clamant social problems of the age. Aurora,² sweet goddess, may arise and kiss the clouds with rosy breath, heaven shine in all its splendour, the fields laugh, and Lydia’s eyes sparkle with love; but the sun’s face looks down on a wearied race, and on the toiler cursing the dawn that recalls him to his bondage.³ Nor have the dead a message of hope for mortals. “Blessed are ye,” they say,⁴ “wayfarers by the hillside bathed in the warm rays of the golden sun. The garlands that crowned our damp skulls are rotted away. Love; and enjoy the sun. Down here ’tis cold. We

¹ “*In una Chiesa gotica.*”—*Odi barbare.*

² “*All’ Aurora.*”—*Odi barbare.*

³ For his sympathy with the poor and disinherited, his scathing indignation at their heartless exploitation by the rich and powerful, see “*Il Carnevale*” in *Levia Gravia.*

⁴ “*Fuori alla Certosa di Bologna.*”—*Odi barbare.*

are alone." He is greatest when expressing the natural beauty and tender associations of classical scenery. For perfect art, subtle magic of style, and sweet pathos, nothing in modern poetry excels such lyrics as *Sirmione* and *Alle Fonti del Clitumno* in the *Odi*. His ideal is essentially modern and democratic. He yearns for a time when labour shall be a joy and love secure, when a mighty people of freemen shall bid the sun shine no more on the slothful ease and selfish wars of tyrants, but on the pious justice of labour.¹

Though one of his Latin translators calls him the most *parlante* of Italian poets, approaching nearest to that ideal poetic style which allows no word or construction that would seem affected in a well-educated girl, yet he is too severely classic; he appeals too exclusively to the learned ever to become a popular poet. Excepting some early patriotic verse, and the rhetorical, revolutionary "Hymn to Satan,"² with its defiant attack on the dominant faith, none of his works seem to have touched any section of the common people. But his noble and austere genius has exercised a mighty power for good on the Italian nation. His example and influence have maintained among the youth of Italy a high standard of scholarship, a sustained enthusiasm for literature, and the habit of a simple and studious life.³ It is not without emotion that the

¹ "*La Madre*."—*Odi barbare*.

² The date of this poem is characteristic: "MDCXVIII. era of the Foundation of Rome."

³ See also *Levia Gravia*, 1875, *Nuove Poesie*, 3rd ed., 1879, *Giambi ed Epodi*, 1882, and a number of critical and other prose writings of great range and power, published in the complete edition of his works by Zanichelli of Bologna. Ten vols. have as yet appeared.

literary pilgrim enters Zanichelli's shop at Bologna to press the veteran poet's hand where he sits of an afternoon, stricken indeed, but with interests and enthusiasm unabated.

In 1877, the year which saw the publication of the *Odi*, a dainty little volume of poems issued from Zanichelli's press, as startling in content as the *Odi* were in form. They purported to be the literary remains of a young poet, Lorenzo Stecchetti, an early victim of Cupid's shafts and tubercular phthisis, and to be edited by his cousin, Olindo Guerrini. Characterised by the morbid sentimentality appropriate to consumptive poets, they were yet penetrated by an ostentatious carnality and irreverence, that outraged the conventionalities, not to speak of the decencies, of literary expression. The success of *Postuma* was immediate. Many, it is said, were the pilgrims of sentiment, who came from all parts of Italy to weep over the tomb of Stecchetti, as of a new Abelard, in the little village of Fiumana, "under the fifth cypress tree on the left as you enter the cemetery," and—found it not.

The volume was followed in 1878 by *Nuova Polemica*, a short collection of poems, dedicated to a local publican, with a long preface by "Lorenzo Stecchetti," in which the writer championed the cause of the *Veristi* (Realists), who had rallied to the defence of *Postuma*. These were a group of ardent literary revolutionists, who affected an impudent realism both in form and content. There was much flouting, often in very bad taste, of time-honoured traditions, but

essentially it was an inevitable revolt, a demand for greater liberty on the part of the new generation, cramped within the narrow area and arbitrary boundaries of the *Idealisti*, who had made a literary fetish of Manzoni's name.¹ Their protagonist writes with a breezy rhetoric, a mordant sarcasm, a playful humour, that either shock or delight the reader. The poems are more shamelessly *décolletés* and profane than *Postuma*.

His theory of art is a familiar one: Art is neither moral nor immoral, but simply good or bad. They who accuse the new school of obscenity or irreligion, confound criticism of thesis with criticism of form; the true distinction being between authors who write well and those who write ill. Life must be portrayed whole, in its deformity as well as in its beauty, and Art, like Ezekiel's mouth, must not turn away from nastiness. In 1897 appeared the *Rime* of Argia Sbolenti, with a preface by "Lorenzo Stecchetti," an even more scandalous *Polemica*. It is difficult, however, to avoid the suspicion that all this shocking cynicism and bohemianism is but a fearsome mask worn to *épater le bourgeois*, "to make the reader's hair stand on end—if he has any." For this literary satyr,² *bevendo in fresco e bestemmiando Cristo*, is none other in private life than Olindo Guerrini himself, a staid civil servant and worthy citizen of Bologna with two grown-up children, an exemplary husband and father, who, after his day's work as librarian, goes home to the wife of his bosom, his

¹ That stormy petrel of Italian politics, Felice Cavallotti, himself no mean poet, was one of the champions of the *Idealisti*. See *Anticaglia*, 1879.

² "Ebbro."—*Postuma*.

donna ideale, who wears a grey dress costing 3s. 6d. a yard.

The true Guerrini may be sought in certain poems like *Justitia* in *Nuova Polemica* and some dozen others at the end of the *Rime*, where "the seven seals are torn from the casket of his heart." Here his verse rings more true and intimate. It is penetrated by a deep sense of human brotherhood and of compassion for the victims of social tyranny and wrong. It burns with indignation at hypocrisy in Church and State, at the bloody Erythrean sacrifice of the youth of Italy, torn from workshop and plough, to the ineptitude or vanity of her evil counsellors and rulers. He claims to have at least the poet's gentle heart if not his skill,¹ though in truth he is endowed with no small faculty of artistic expression. But all interest in the logomachy of *Veristi* and *Idealisti* is long dead, and whether his verse will survive by its art alone is doubtful.

In the late seventies, a young Neapolitan, nursing hatred of compulsory academic verse, was passing through this same city of Bologna. Arrested by the appearance of some volumes of Carducci's poems, he bought and devoured them with feverish interest. He learned the *Odi* by heart, and, with Southern impetuosity, dedicated himself to the service of the Muses. His first essays in poetry² were hailed as the promise of a new glory to Italian letters. The great critic Chiarini spared neither fatherly counsel nor sympathy to the

¹ "Io ch' ho in petto il gentil cuor del poeta, se me ne manca l' arte."—*Justitia*.

² *Primo Vere*, 1880.

young poet; but the children of the brain no less than those of the loins are wont to get beyond their parents' control; and even so it was with D'Annunzio, who soon developed a passionate hedonism,¹ an "aphrodisiac frenzy," which dismayed and at length disgusted Chiarini.

D'Annunzio is the Tannhäuser of Italian poetry,² defiantly singing of his passion, his falls into sensuality, his remorse, his attempts to escape, his feeble courage, his self-contempt—all with exquisite art and passionate music. But, convinced that the novel was destined to be the art form of the future, he turned from poetry and adopted fiction as the expression of his genius. His novels are essentially studies in mental and sexual pathology.³ There is hardly an important character in them, who is a sane, healthy human being. His best known work, *Trionfo della Morte*, has been described by an Italian critic as "the clinical history of a special form of rudimentary paranoia in a degenerate." The story is told with an opulent beauty of style and an elaborate art that often captivate the imagination, but the most loathsome details of a worse than bestial passion are dwelt on with nauseating insistence. Even the French translator has not dared to give in their entirety the *inventions de ce terrible homme, ce Baudelaire effréné*.⁴

How much of his fame with the reading public

¹ *Canto Nuovo*, 1882; *Intermezzo di Rime*, 1883.

² *Poema Paradisiaco*, 1891.

³ See *Il Piacere*, *L'Innocente*, *Trionfo della Morte*. Good sea legs are needed to brave a course of D'Annunzio.

⁴ See De Vogüé in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 1, 1895.

north of the Alps is due to the subjects he treats of, or to the gorgeous pageant of his prose, it were hard to judge. Certainly many Italians are at a loss to account for the vogue he enjoys abroad. His egoism, his obsession by the boudoir and the lupanar, disgust them. His latest work, *Fuoco*, an unseemly exploitation for literary purposes of a liaison with a famous actress, has pained them. They reflect with some bitterness that while the names of Carducci, of Fogazzaro, of Pascoli are little known abroad, D'Annunzio's works are regarded as the highest manifestation of the Italian genius. It must be remembered, however, that his European reputation is largely based upon the French translations of his novels. Any one who will compare the partially deodorised French version of the *Trionfo* with the Italian original will learn how much the author owes to M. Herelle's critical sagacity and courage and fine sense of proportion.

D'Annunzio's fame has hardly been increased by his dramatic works. His introspective habit of mind and lack of wide human sympathy; his genius, which interprets *suffering* more than *doing*, unfit him for grasping a dramatic action and developing it clearly and inevitably before the spectator. Felicitous expression, gorgeous rhetoric, vehement passion, are good as clothing, but unless the author possess the faculty of creating a real man or woman that shall be convincing to his audience, the accessories count for little. Whatever else be accidental, the creative power is essential, and except the dramatist efface himself in his characters, he will fail of achievement. This is

precisely what D'Annunzio cannot do. Behind all his puppets we are conscious of the writer's overweening egoism ; and so Byron's fate as a dramatist will be his.

Even his style, Italians have complained to us, is marred by an elaborate preciosity and an affected archaism.¹ It certainly lacks virility and simplicity. We are too conscious of effort ; the word is too much with us. And the passions he treats of have neither dignity nor grandeur. His social horizon is narrow ; he has no outlook on the great, living, toiling world about him ; nothing but contempt for the democracy²—the *gran bestia trionfante*. Over all his works there hangs a pall of melancholy ; the greyiness of his mental horizon is relieved by no flash of humour ; his purview of life is void of faith, of hope, and of charity. He is the least Italian of writers. Like all passion-ridden souls, he has but little originality. Ever subject to foreign influences, he is dominated now by the French decadents, now by de Maupassant, now by Dostoievsky, now by Nietzsche.

But the time is not yet to pass a final judgment on this wayward genius. He is barely over the *mezzo del cammin*. A saving love of nature, a passionate feeling for the sea³ meet one at times in his works like the sweet breath of heaven stirring the foul air of a lazaret-house. By his devotion to his art he has faithfully upheld the traditions of the new Italian school. He

¹ In the prose of daily life "Gabriel of the Annunciation" is plain Signor Rapagnetta.

² He went over, however, to the Opposition in the parliamentary struggle of last year. See p. 70.

³ See the *Odi Navali*, 1893.

gave five years to the *Trionfo*. Whatever views we may hold of his artistic ideals, no one can doubt the sincerity of his self-revelation and the marvellous power he has of gripping the attention. Once under the spell of his genius, the reader is held with invincible fascination. But the Muses are nine, and Erato is she who has the smallest lyre; may he soon escape her thraldom.

And now we turn to a greater than he; we reach a purer air, a loftier outlook, a wider horizon. Better known as novelist than poet, Antonio Fogazzaro is the one figure in contemporary fiction worthy to stand by his master, Manzoni. Though on its artistic side his poetry falls short of excellency, it is informed with a sympathy, a gentleness, and a strength, which leave a refreshing taste after the morbid and heady productions of a D'Annunzio. His first published poem, *Miranda*,¹ tells of the tragic loves of a maiden of noble family and a young poet. The theme is trite enough, but Fogazzaro's wondrous personality has invested it with rare freshness and charm. We are reminded of Margaret in Goethe's "Faust," as the whole-hearted, truthful love of a gentle girlish nature is revealed. In *A Sera*² he gives expression to his deep religious feeling and his sympathy with human sorrow. In the sweet melancholy of the evening shadows falling on a peaceful Italian vale he hears the rich-tongued bells from height and depth praying for pity on the living and the dead; on hidden sin and pain; on all who sleep, guilty or innocent, in the quiet cemetery; for peace to all who live, and feel, and love, and sorrow.

¹ 1874.

² *Valsolda*, 1876.

The poems in *Valsolda*, that are inspired by scenes of natural beauty, seem almost pantheistic in feeling. They betray a deep sense of the divinity in external phenomena, a strangely Teutonic habit of mind that loves to personify and commune with natural objects. To Fogazzaro, as to Faust, it has been vouchsafed to gaze into the heart of nature as into the bosom of a friend, and know his brethren in the silent bush, in the air, and in the water.

As a novelist he is dominated by an unfailing purpose. Art, he believes, should concern itself not only with physical, but with moral and intellectual beauty.¹ Its mission is to cooperate with the cause of the universe; to strengthen that divine element in human nature, which aspires to a greater knowledge and a purer love. The study of the human beast is not excluded, but man's struggle to tread under foot the brute within must hold first place. His theme is the perennial strife between moral principle and human lust; between duty and self-interest; between faith and unbelief.

Fogazzaro's genius matured slowly. It was not till 1896, when he was fifty-four years of age, that he won the primacy of modern Italian fiction by the *Piccolo Mondo antico*²—a masterly picture of a phase of Italian life now past, the time of the Austrian domination in the North between '48 and '59, when men were divided, not by class distinctions, but by Austrian and patriot sympathies. The novel just misses greatness by reason

¹ See a lecture given in Paris, published in *Ascensioni umane*.

² *Piccolo Mondo moderno* is now appearing in the *Nuova Antologia*.

of the besetting impulse of the author (though here seen in lesser degree) to make his principal characters protagonists of an ideal. At the supreme crisis of his life—the loss of an only child—Frank, his hero, gains strength from Faith to rise above despair and consecrate his life to a noble cause, to live, suffer, work, and die, if need be, for Italy; while the mother, Louisa, who lacks the Faith, breaks down, hopeless and comfortless, under a violent reaction against the injustice and cruelty of fate. In *Malombra*, in *Daniele Cortis*, in the *Mistero del Poeta*, this subordination of character to thesis, this tendency to preach, are more marked. It is the minor personages, such as Zio Piero in the *Piccolo Mondo* and Don Innocenzio, the delightful old priest in *Malombra*, who are truest to nature, while the central figures often lose their individuality in the dim outline of the ideal type.

Fogazzaro is a force that makes for strength, and sanity, and righteousness. Inspired by the romantic school of Scott and Manzoni, he adds that subtle power of psychological analysis, which the more complex art of modern times demands, and a piercing insight into human character, which comes of absolute sincerity and undeviating truthfulness. An enlightened Catholic, a Christian Socialist, a fervent patriot, taking his part in communal government, fond of athletics; his popular sympathies, his sunny good-humour, his deep sense of the pathos and tragedy of humble life, his invincible faith in the ideal, make him a noble and lovable figure amid so much that is morbid and faithless in contemporary fiction.

His political creed, Mazzinian in its idealism, is developed at length in *Daniele Cortis*. The Fatherland may not be held together by struts and clamps like an ancient monument. Providence has not raised Italy from the dead that a bad democracy may rub shoulders with a bad literature. The monarchy is not a something in the clouds, but a power responsible before God and man. He dreams of an alliance between King and Church to inaugurate an era of social reform, of a fraternity of science and faith working together for the common weal. No republic will solve the problem of the future and effect this orderly social revolution, unless the religious sentiment has its part; and this in Italy can only be given by the Catholic Church. But she must renounce her blind opposition to the national movement and fatal esteem of worldly goods. She must teach her priesthood something more than the *Summa contra gentes*. And as for the rest, *avanti a tutti Italia!*

His ideal Catholicism is a religion illumined by love and intelligence, compatible with every new discovery of the human mind. He dreams of a time when representatives from all the religions of the world shall meet as brethren to do homage to the universal fatherhood of God. A convinced Darwinian, he startled the Church by a public avowal of his belief in evolution at a lecture in Venice on St. Augustin and Darwin in 1891. Needless to say, this did not endear him to official Catholicism. The *Civiltà cattolica* trained her big guns on him; his reply may be read, together with a report of the lecture, in *Ascensioni umane*.¹ Like

¹ 1899. He seems, however, to follow Wallace rather than Darwin as to the evolution of man.

most Italian thinkers, he has a profound admiration for Herbert Spencer. "One cannot read Spencer," he says, "without being struck by the wealth of his imagination; on that side of his genius he is a great poet." But, when party passion runs high, he that is not with me is against me. Fogazzaro's calm, philosophic outlook causes him to be rejected by the Clericalists, and looked on with suspicion by the Democrats. Like Dante of old, he has become a party unto himself, and in his beautiful home at Valsolda, by Lake Lugano, he devotes his life to neighbourly service and to his art.

*Pensa a Iddio, l'ideal, prega, lavora ;
Sii grande e puro.
Io non piego, io non gemo, altero al mio
Posto di guerra attendo il giorno, e Dio.*

"Meditate on God and the ideal, pray and labour; be great and pure. I bend not, nor do I complain; a warrior at his post, I await the dawn and God."

An interesting subject to the student of fiction is afforded by the literary career of Giovanni Verga, best known out of Italy by the association of the dramatized version of his *Cavalleria Rusticana* with Mascagni's music. The evolution of modern realism is epitomized in his works. Beginning as a conventional novelist, he reaches a final development as a consistent realist. Of the first period, a typical example is *Tigre Reale*.¹ Here we have the whole stock-in-trade of the romanticist—the cruel beauty with marble forehead and glacial smile, jealous as a panther, a lioness in fury when balked of her love;

¹ 1875.

illicit passion; the duel with the outraged husband; the despairing lover who blows his brains out at his mistress' door; the death from consumption; the final reconciliation between husband and wife. To turn from *Tigre Reale* to *I Malavoglia*¹ is to jump from the younger Dumas to Zola. *I Malavoglia* opens a series of studies (*I Vinti*), designed to treat of the passions set in motion by the impulse in modern civilization towards material advancement, and by the effort in the individual to climb the social steps. In *I Malavoglia* the struggle is for the necessities of life among the lowest class. These being satisfied, there follow: greed of riches typified in *Mastro-Don Gesualdo*, a study of middle-class provincial life; aristocratic vanity, in the *Duchessa di Leyra*; political ambition, in the *Onorevole Scipione*; culminating in *L'Uomo di Lusso*, who sums all these passions in himself and is consumed by them. These are types of the *Vinti* (the Vanquished), fallen by the way and crushed under foot by the victors pressing on in the feverish race for material progress.² *I Malavoglia* is a careful and minute study of the life of peasant and fisher folk in a Sicilian village wrought with much wealth of detail and clearness of outline. The tragedy of the sea, the poverty, the hardness, the sordid ideals, the petty gossip and scandal of village life; the familiar types of the syndie, the reactionary priest, the republican apothecary, the returned conscript,

¹ 1881.

² See preface to *I Malavoglia*. Only two of the series have as yet appeared.

Uncle Crucifix the miserly money-lender—only those who know the life of a Southern village can fully appreciate the art which brings this little world before us in such vivid relief.

Mastro-Don Gesualdo, Zola-like in bulk, for it reaches 527 pages, continues the series. We mount a rung in the ladder. We see the decaying survivors of feudalism—the *Barone* and the *Baronessa*, with their pride of family and fallen state; the contest between new men and old acres; the upstart, hard-headed, successful speculator; the marriage of wealth with rank; the shadow of death withering up the fruits of success; the pride of money and power turning to dust and ashes in the mouth.

Verga is a master of the short story. *Semplice Vita*,¹ *Via Crucis*,¹ *L'ultima Giornata*¹ are human documents of life in a great modern city, that chill the heart in their piteous realism. *La Lupa*,² *L'asino di San Giuseppe*² are sketches of Sicilian peasant life, that appal the reader by the depravity and cruelty they reveal; we seem almost face to face with the elemental savagery of brute nature. The figure of the physician in Rembrandt's "Lesson in Anatomy" comes back to us, as this clear-eyed, impressive observer stands outside his subject and lays bare the organism of modern society. Here in Milan, there in the South life is such: results are such and such. In common with writers of the realistic school, Verga is too prone to dwell on social pathology; on the

¹ *Per le Vie*, 1883.

² *Vita dei Campi*, 1880.

² *Novelle rusticane*, 1883.

baser traits of human nature; on physical suffering and disease. Everything is seen in a hard light: there is no atmosphere of poetic emotion. He sometimes allows the interest of the story to be almost smothered under a mass of details, and scatters popular proverbs and local idioms over his pages with too lavish a hand. But when all is said, Verga, by regarding these doomed creatures as the victims of remorseless social and hereditary forces, lifts even the most sordid of stories into a region of tragic pathos. His types are true so far as they go; but one who has lived with *Barone* and *Contadino* alike cannot accept these powerful canvasses as pictures of Italian or, indeed, of Sicilian life as a whole. For its sunny good-humour, its gentleness, its loving-kindness, its native courtesy, its piety, we must go to Pascoli's poetry and to novelists like Fogazzaro and Emilio De Marchi, whose writings are coloured with a sympathy, a tenderness, a delicacy, for which one vainly searches in Verga, and which are at least as real and true to nature as the more firmly drawn and harder figures of the Sicilian master.

Emilio De Marchi, whose untimely death this very month¹ was a sad loss to Italian letters, has been called the Dickens of Italy, and by some critics is held to be a worthy compeer of Fogazzaro himself. One priceless service, at least, he has done to the literature of his fatherland. At a time when Italian fiction was wavering between the realism of Zola and the nerveless cosmopolitanism of D'Annunzio, he held fast to the Manzonian tradition, and preserved

¹ February 1901.

in his works the "savour of the homely *minestra*." His short stories¹ are simple, direct sketches, mainly of humble life, which he interprets with a serene philosophy that tempers his judgments with kindness. He has a profound conviction of the essential goodness of human nature, a gentle irony with no tinge of bitterness, a saving humour that keeps his pathos this side of sentimentality. Of his more ambitious works, the best is *Demetrio Pianelli*, a finely-drawn and keenly-observed picture of Milanese bureaucracy. He has also published a volume of poems, *Cadenze vecchie e nuove*, pensive in tone, delicate in feeling, and classic in form. Students of literature, who would gain a full and intimate conception of the Italian character, will do well to supplement their reading of Verga by a perusal of some, at least, of the works of Fogazzaro and De Marchi.

A valiant fighter with sword and pen for the national cause is Edmondo De Amicis, author of the most popular book in modern Italian—the only one, indeed, that has reached a phenomenal circulation. *Cuore*, now in its 246th thousand, is the story of a year passed in a communal school, told by a lad in a series of impressions noted day by day. It is written with rare insight and charm, and appeals to old and young alike. One of the earliest signs of an awakening interest in literature after the absorbing struggle for national independence was the success of his *Vita Militare*, published in 1867. The writer, by his talent for giving literary expression to the vicissitudes of a

¹ *Storie d'ogni colore*, 1885; *Nuove Storie d'ogni colore*, 1895.

soldier's life, touched a subject that was of present interest to every household in Italy. For the period, it had a remarkable circulation, which encouraged De Amicis to turn to literature as a profession. He resigned his commission in the army and travelled in search of impressions. There is small need to dwell on the series of volumes he subsequently published. They have been widely translated, and are well known outside Italy. Their author possesses a choice aptitude for picturesque description; his impressions are coloured by a highly-strung and imaginative temperament; he writes with an easy grace and playful sense of humour. But his style lacks virility; he is wanting in breadth of composition; his sentiment at times thins out to sentimentality. Among his more essentially Italian works *Il Romanzo d'un Maestro* holds deservedly a high place. It is a heart-rending story, or rather series of sketches, of the cruel lot of the Italian elementary teacher, painted in sombre colours, which happily now seem overdone, though indeed the partial failure of recent legislation proves that the evil still persists to the shame of Italian statesmen.

De Amicis, like so many of his cultured countrymen, has been won to the new Socialist movement,¹ and in recent years has devoted himself more to the study of economic subjects than to imaginative writing. He is persuaded that literature must take sides in the issues raised by new social ideals; that the novel is

¹ He was led to the study of social questions by personal experience of the piteous sufferings of Italian emigrants on a voyage out from Genoa, and by reflecting on the economic *miseria* that lay behind. See *Sull'Oceano*, 6th ed., 1889.

destined to be the form of future propaganda; that Socialism will give a new vitality to Italian letters. Apart from studies and pamphlets dealing with social problems, his most important work in recent years is *La Carrozza di tutti* (Everybody's carriage),¹ sketches of typical Piedmontese characters as seen and noted in the tramcars of Turin. They are written with all the author's charm of manner and delicate sensibility. He has also published a small volume of poems,² in which he touches a chord in the hearts of Latin peoples, their deep maternal piety, that never fails of a response. He is one of the most *simpatico* of Italian writers.

If we may compare the arts of painting and of poetry, Giovanni Pascoli is the Millet of Italian verse, transmuting by the alchemy of his genius into beauty and pathos that very peasant life, which becomes so sordid and grovelling in the hands of a Verga and a D'Annunzio, when, indeed, the latter deigns to stoop his vision so low. To read *Sementa* is to escape from the aching unrest of a modern city to the refreshing calm of a country life, with its humble joys and full diurnal round of healthful toil. To the *capoccio*³ as he lay in the stillness of the night, the crickets, mourning the parting summer, seemed to cry, "Sow thy seed! Sow thy seed!" In the darkness before the dawn the dun cows are yoked to the plough; with careful hand the peasant scatters his seed. The stars appear again ere the day's work is done. Meanwhile at home Rosa the fair-haired sings as the shuttle

¹ Eleventh thousand, 1899.

² *Poesie*, 3rd ed., 1882.

³ The head of a peasant farmer's household.

flies "Mary sought her Son." The mother's call is heard. Father will be home at the *Ave Maria*. The preparation of the simple evening repast is told: the steaming savoury herbs, the scent of the olive oil, the broaching of the cask. The Angelus rings in the deepening twilight. With grave and tremulous voice the village bells seem to pray to Him who made the ear and harvest and life, that not in vain yon folk may sow their daily bread in the dead furrow. The sowers recite the *Ave Maria*. The goodwife comes forth to meet them—not alone, for Rosa the fair and Viola the dark-haired with lither step trip at her side. His seed well sown, the tired peasant hears not by night the falling rain. He is dreaming of the growing corn, the advancing spring, the blossoming of the peach, the busy hum of bees, the ripening ear; already he feels the scythe in his hand. Rosa, too, dreams of the birds and the woods, of the young hunter who shared their noonday meal. And so the poem ends on a note of promise, of Nature's bounty and of awakening love.

His first volume of poems, *Myricae*,¹ was written under the shadow of a great sorrow—the memory of his father's tragic death (he was killed by brigands) and of his mother's ever-present and fatal grief. They breathe a perfume of sweet melancholy healed by Nature's presence. He sings of the life of woods and fields, the seasons, rain and storm, snow and wind, the poet's sorrows and joys, the mystery of pain and death. But with hope. For if under every stone

¹ 1891.

there lurks a scorpion, every cypress has its nest.¹ In the preface he promises that some day he will repeat with richer voice what he had sung in tones not yet sure and clear. The promise is fulfilled in the *Poemetti*,² the first of which, *Sementa*, we have already summarized. The subjects are chiefly the same as in *Myricae*, but wrought with more perfect art and informed with deeper thought. True, he has no answer to the riddle of existence.³ He is wont to speak in parables, and helps the panting human soul rather by sympathy and suggestion. He can stoop to the meanest realities of life and invest them with beauty, or soar to the highest region of thought, to the inscrutable mysteries of the universe. By virtue of his art, by its majesty and beauty and strength, by its classic sobriety,⁴ he is the one contemporary worthy to stand by Carducci. We feel the same glow of passionate but controlled emotion, the same power of fusing noble thought into perfect form. But his call to a simpler life, to a nearer communion with our mother earth, make him akin to thinkers like Ruskin, who teach that too heavy a price is being paid for the complicated materialism of modern civilization, that living is sacrificed to getting, life to the means of life.⁵

One of the most talented and widely read of Italian writers is Matilde Serao, daughter of a Neapolitan exile

¹ *Cuore umano*.

² 2nd ed., 1900.

³ *Il libro*.

⁴ He twice won the gold medal for Latin verse at the International Competition at Amsterdam. See *Phydyle*, &c., published Amsterdam, 1894.

⁵ Once a socialist communal councillor, he has long since given up any active part in political life, though he remains a socialist in theory.

and a Greek princess, who by indomitable pluck and industry raised herself from the position of a poor clerk in a telegraph office to become one of the most prominent journalists in Italy.¹ While doing odd work at reporting, she published some realistic sketches in various newspapers, which attracted attention, and in 1880, by the publication of *Fantasia*, made her mark as a novelist. Commonplace enough in many of its incidents, it is characterized by much vivacity of style and acuteness of observation, and the authoress by her art has invested with a certain dignity and inevitableness what were else a vulgar story of adulterous passion. But it is by her faithful and sympathetic sketches of Neapolitan life that this versatile artist is justly famous. *Il Ventre di Napoli* is a passionate appeal, straight from a woman's heart, to the rulers of Italy, pleading that no mere "gutting" of Naples by a few new streets can avail aught in healing the terrible social and economic miseries of her people. Few books move the reader more than this little volume of one hundred pages, telling of the moral and physical diseases that lie festering beneath the fair sky and picturesque beauty of this metropolis of the South—the gross half-pagan superstition, the universal lust for gambling, the poverty, the squalor; yet withal a people of quick intelligence, patient of toil, naturally gentle, with an inbred love of music and colour. Let those who are tempted to indulge a facile indignation at the more obvious vices and darker features of

¹ See *Vita e Avventure di Riccardo Joanna*, 1887, for a striking picture of Italian journalism in the bohemian days of twenty years ago.

Neapolitan life turn to the last chapter of this book, and learn somewhat of the exquisite refinement of its charity, the inexhaustible springs of human pity and neighbourly love, that sweeten the lives of this much-maligned people and make up a "daily martyrdom of incalculable self-sacrifice." In *Il Paese di Cuccagna*, on the whole her best work, this material has been woven into a powerful story of the evil wrought by the passion for gambling fostered in the State lotteries. We see six centuries of noble lineage ending in a sordid gamester, who sacrifices honour, possessions, wife, and daughter to the mad frenzy for gain. But the doom of the Marchese Carlo Cavalcante, the hopeless loves of Dr. Amati and the Marchesina Bianca Maria and her pitiful death, are but a framework on which are hung vivid and faithful sketches of the varied phases of Neapolitan life.

It is usual to class Serao as a realist, but her realism is touched with emotion. The picture of prison life in *All' Erta Sentinella* has a tone of sentiment alien to realistic methods, and later in her career she avows her sympathy with the idealism of Fogazzaro. Her visit to Palestine¹ has drawn her heart, if not her intellect, to the Church of Christ. She stretches forth her arms to the Cross, and, murmuring the words of the ancient Christians, *Ave spes unica*, lays her book at its foot—"the most sincere and human, if not the most artistic of my works." Whether Socialist or not, she is concerned with the economic and social distress of the common people, and would join them

¹ *Il Paese di Gesù.*

in a communion of love and sorrow and pain. Her style is characterized by a journalistic facility which makes much of her work read thin, and she is accused of writing an incorrect Italian. But, at least, her books are alive, and in matters of idiomatic purity much may be forgiven to a novelist of so poetic and individual a temperament as Matilde Serao.

In the early nineties there appeared in the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Illustrazione popolare* some remarkable poems, which were added to and published (1892) in a volume, *Fatalità*. They were written with a spontaneity and individuality of style that at once arrested attention, and it was soon recognized that in Ada Negri the toiling masses of modern industrialism had found a voice no less sincere than passionate. Doomed to earn her bread, if indeed bread were always forthcoming, by the most wretched of all professions¹ in Italy—that of an elementary schoolmistress: to her squalid garret in a poor Lombard village the muses came and bade her sing of the aspirations, the unrest, the long-suffering, the hatreds of her class.² It is difficult to give the reader who is unfamiliar with the originals an adequate conception of the concentrated passion, the nervous energy, that quiver in every fibre of this frail, solitary daughter of the people athirst for love and social justice and beauty. Wielding a lash that seems knotted with scorn, she scourges the dominant classes of society; we can almost hear the swish of her whip as it cuts the

¹ For a vivid picture of the sufferings of this unhappy profession, see De Amicis' *Il Romanzo d'un Maestro*, noticed on p. 343.

² Her mother was a poor factory hand at Lodi. Her father she never knew: he died in hospital. See *L'Ospedale Maggiore*.—*Tempest*.

faces of the smug, astute bourgeois¹ and his chlorotic *donnina*—the false world of pigmy cowards who would obscure the ideal and clip the wings of enthusiasm. As she broods over her fate, the pale figure of Ill-fortune² by her bedside claims her, yet bids her remember that the sun of glory illumines those who labour in blood and tears; that sorrow gives wings to the ideal; that victory is for those who have brave hearts and fight on. An “enigma of hatred and love,” she weeps with pity for the ill-fed in her class of eighty children;³ she cannot look on a poor, ragged, shoeless street-arab,⁴ and think of his probable fate, without yearning to clasp him to her breast in a supreme embrace of pity and sorrow. She hears the infinite hordes of toilers⁵ advancing with a noise of thunder, in serried ranks, bareheaded, with fevered eyes; from fireless hearths and sleepless beds, from alley and hovel, they press upon her; she feels their hoarse breath on her cheeks. She gives the pity they ask, but mingles it with fierce indignation. In *Tempeste*⁶ she tells of the sacrifice and the tragedies of the poor—the workless, the ejected, the dead and wounded of the mine, the victims of machinery.

But it is hard to tread the wine-press alone. “I am thy brother in misery,” she says to a beggar asking for bread; “in tears and fever I am dying, homesick for love.” Poetic fame and devotion to a cause have never yet satisfied the hunger of a woman’s heart, nor stilled her invincible craving for personal affection.

¹ *Sfida*.² *Fatalità*.³ *Sinite Parvulos*.⁴ *Birrichino di Strada*.⁵ *I Vinti*.⁶ 1895.

One, on whom she had bestowed the fine gold of her love, either by fault or by fate rejected it, and parted for America at the very time when a scholarship and a post at Milan assured her that leisure for self-culture she so ardently desired. In *Tempeste* are certain poems that tell with no less intensity and vehemence the bitterness of this disappointed passion. A later attachment found a happier issue; but by a superb irony of fate, this social rebel, who had spurned with scorn the professed love of a young *signore*, "a calf of gold," because he was not a worker; she whose ideal of manly excellence was a stalwart, broad-chested mechanic, with pale, thoughtful face and neck of bronze; she who bade pallid, nerve-ridden dames, with waxlike hands, and phantoms in stovepipe hats grasp the spade and turn to fruitful labour on the land; this railing accuser of the capitalist and the exploiter, is now the *Signora* Garlanda, wife of a rich manufacturer in Milan, her lyre unstrung, her music silent.

These are some of the poets and novelists who have wrought so faithfully and well for the literary New Life of Italy. But it is ill judging for a foreigner, where native critics are not agreed. Lack of space rather than of esteem bids us pass by with a mere mention other soldiers of the intellect, who have an equal, perchance a greater, right to more generous treatment:—Arturo Graf, gloomiest of pessimists, expressing with rare art the brooding melancholy which he probably inherits from his half-German parentage. To him the bright Italian sky with its *formidabile azzurro*,¹ the same

¹ *Amurro*.

yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, weighs upon the world like the immense covering of a tomb, and Nature under her white breast conceals a heart born for treachery :¹—Rapisardi, the exuberant Sicilian singer and fierce antagonist of Carducci; Panzacchi, the beloved poet of Bologna; Nencioni, Marradi, Chiarini, and others of the brilliant constellation of poets that clustered round Carducci; Giacosa, the one successful dramatic poet of modern Italy. But it avails little to string mere names together. We have preferred to sketch, all too lightly, some of the more salient figures among the living masters of an undeservedly neglected literature. Viewing as a whole the harvest of the past thirty years, and comparing it with the almost sterile days of the fifties and sixties, we have reason to hope well for the future of Italian letters. The time of French domination in the literary world is as dead as that of Austrian in the political. And although to this day publishers' catalogues of cheap fiction show how much of the mental pabulum of the reading public in Italy is raided from French novelists, there is a growing band of native writers of talent and originality competing for its suffrages. A more effectual elementary education, the greater power to purchase and increased opportunity of leisure, that will come from the expanding resources of Italy and from a more enlightened polity in her rulers, will increase the number of readers and react on the authors who appeal to them. Pity that the long neglect of the Italian language in England fences us out from so rich and fair a pasture.

¹ *O Natura*,

A'PPENDIX

THE following list contains a few of the best and most recent books on Italian subjects. The authors would be glad to help students of special subjects by referring them to other sources of information. Letters should be addressed to them, c/o Messrs. Nisbet, Berners Street, W.

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— Partiti e programmi. *Nuova Antologia*, Oct. 16, 1900.
COLAJANINI. Banche e parlamento. Milan, 1893.
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- Atti e documenti del XVI. Congresso Cattolico italiano tenutosi a Ferrara. Venice, 1899.
- BERTHELET. Le futur Pape. Paris, 1899.
- CARASSAI. Le corporazioni religiose. *Nuova Antologia*, Aug. 1, 1896.
- La verità intorno alla questione romana, per B. O. S. Ed. 9. Prato, 1889.
- LEONIS XIII Epistolæ encyclicæ. Turin, 1892.
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- Congresso Nazionale del partito socialista italiano, 1897. Il partito socialista e le classi agricole. Milan, 1897.
- 1900. Various reports to. Modena, 1900.
- Critica Sociale (La)*. Milan.

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- COLAJANNI. Gli avvenimenti in Sicilia. Palermo, 1895.
- Milano durante i tumulti 6-10 Maggio 1898. Supplemento illustrato alla *Lega Lombarda*. Milan, n.d.
- VALERA. L'assalto al convento. Milan, 1899.
- Dal Cellulare a Finalborgo. Milan, 1899.
- VILLARI. Nuovi Problemi. *Nuova Antologia*, Nov. 16 and Dec. 16, 1899.

North and South.

- CUTREIRA. La Mafia e i Mafiosi. Palermo, 1900.
- MOSCA. Che cosa è la Mafia? Bologna, 1900.
- NIOFORO. L'Italia barbara contemporanea. Milan, 1898.
- NITTI. Nord e Sud. Turin, 1900.

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- Atti della giunta per la inchiesta agraria. 22 vols. Rome, 1881-86.
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